WYOMING Land Use Decisions

Overland Area

Rawlins District

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LANDS

MINERALS

RANGE MANAGEMENT

WILD FREE-ROAMING HORSES

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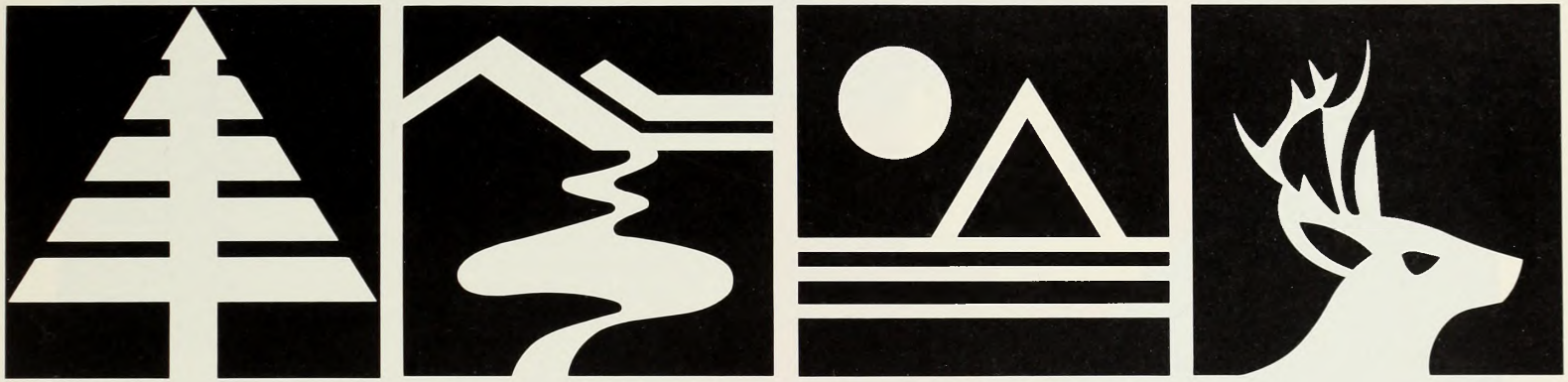
FOREST PRODUCTS

WATERSHED

RECREATION

WILDLIFE



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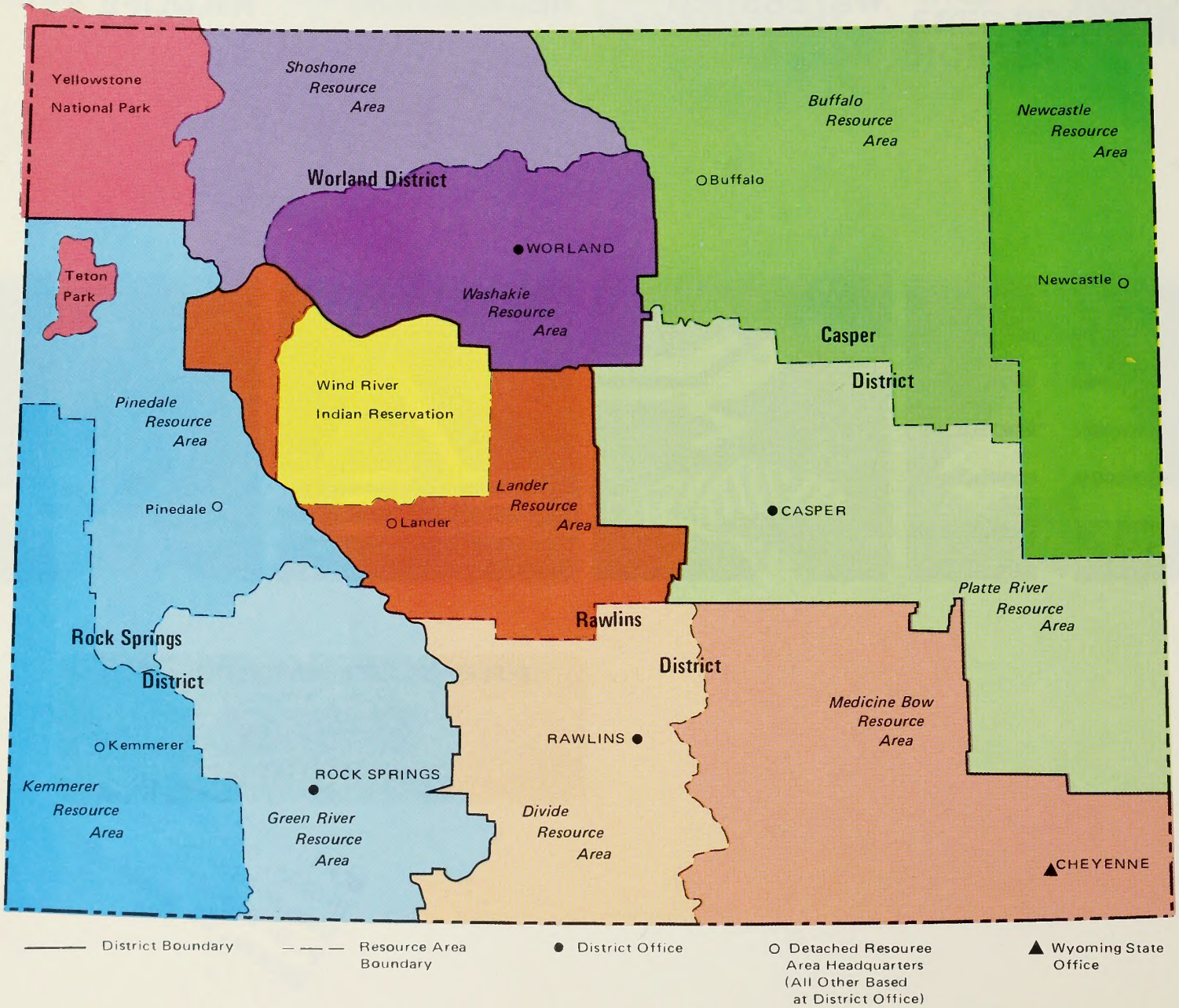

PURPOSE

This brochure summarizes the land use decisions in the Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Overland Planning Unit.

Because of the number and complexity of the decisions, it is impossible to present all of them in this brochure. We have, therefore, summarized only the significant decisions for each resource activity.

The complete plan, with related documents, is available at the district office in Rawlins. You are invited to visit and review it at your convenience. My staff and I are available to discuss the decisions and assist you in reviewing the document.

If, after reading this summary of land use decisions, you wish to comment, there is a reply form inside the back cover for your use.

Again I thank all the persons, organizations and governmental agencies which contributed so significantly to this project. Your assistance was invaluable in completing resource inventories, developing future land use recommendations and commenting on these recommendations as well as the decisions for use of these public lands.

Fred Wolf

Fred Wolf
District Manager
Rawlins District
July 28, 1977

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OVERVIEW

This brochure summarizes the revision and consolidation of several Management Framework Plans (MFPs) prepared prior to 1973. The revision was needed to provide more detail for an environmental statement on coal leasing.

This plan will serve as a guide for the surface management of the public lands as well as the Federal mineral estates, some of which lie under privately owned surface.

The plan includes a narrative and graphic display of the land use decisions supported by rationale for each program (lands, minerals, range, forestry, watershed, recreation and wildlife).

The MFP is a working document. It is a guide for day-to-day activity. The planning decisions allocate resources and land uses, thereby defining and resolving use conflicts. Program objectives and land use allocations set forth in the MFP provide a framework for developing program action plans such as management of wildlife habitat, grazing, wild horses, minerals and recreation.

Final planning decisions are subject to revision at any time in response to changing conditions or demands. Significant revisions will involve public input and review.

Public participation is an integral part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning process. This process requires that all interested citizens be given an opportunity to express their views and desires, raise specific issues and explore alternatives.

Public involvement for the Overland MFP began in the spring of 1976 with individual contacts throughout the area to gather information and to acquire recommendations concerning land use. Future planning was discussed with special interest groups, including the ranchers, in November 1976.

Public land use planning is a public matter. This public meeting at Rawlins was one of several ways in which the public contributed to the final Overland MFP decisions.

The BLM published a full-page advertisement on November 23, 1976, in the Rawlins Daily Times, to summarize the major issues involved in the unit. Copies of this ad were mailed with other planning information to all identified interest groups and individuals. A news release was issued in conjunction with the advertisement and the direct mailing. News articles appeared in all of the newspapers in the district, as well as on radio and television newscasts.

An open house and workshop was held in Rawlins on November 30 and December 1, 1976. These meetings were well attended by a wide cross-section of the public and industry. Approximately 150 people were involved at the workshop and contributed many recommendations on eleven major issues. The workshop was well covered in the news media.

There were some 60 written recommendations on land disposal, coal leasing, oil and gas development, range management, watershed protection, off-road vehicle use, historic trails and wildlife habitat.

On December 10 the district presented proposed land use decisions, with a summary of public comment, to the Multiple Use Advisory Board for its review. In mid-December the district met with Sweetwater and Carbon County Commissioners, their Planning Commissions and Planners to review the planning documents. Meetings to discuss the proposed decisions were held with Game and Fish Department personnel and 20 other state agency representatives. Many sessions also were held with service clubs throughout the area.

In mid-April 1977, a 36-page brochure summarizing the proposed land use decisions was widely distributed to interested individuals and groups. Additionally, an advertisement was published in district newspapers announcing meetings and hearings dates and the availability of the brochure. Several press releases resulted in news stories in area daily and weekly newspapers.

On April 22, the public attended a final public meeting and hearing to review and comment on the proposed decisions. In view of general concurrence on most of the issues, only the proposed decisions for oil and gas have been modified.

Fred Wolf

Fred Wolf
District Manager

The Adobe Town badlands southwest of Rawlins—home for such raptors as the prairie falcon—contrast with the unit's generally rolling prairie.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

(See General Location Map, Page 5.)

The Overland Planning Unit contains nearly 3.2 million acres of land, 1.9 million acres (58%) of which is public land administered by the BLM. The land ownership pattern is diverse.

For example, the area west of Baggs, Wyoming is virtually all public land. The area north and east of Baggs along the Medicine Bow National Forest exhibits mixed ownership patterns where large tracts of state and privately owned lands are intermingled with the public land.

Almost all of the northern two-thirds of the planning unit is in a "checkerboard" land ownership pattern, where every other section of land is privately owned. There are approximately 150,000 acres of private land on which mineral rights were reserved to the federal government when the land was transferred to private ownership.

Topography ranges from steep, rugged hills and mountains and high rims to rolling hills and flat bottom lands. Major land features are Atlantic Rim, The Rawlins Uplift, Haystack Mountains, Separation Flats, Middlewood Hill, Adobe Town and the Delaney Rim. Large areas of undeveloped, unfenced open space exist throughout the planning unit.

Predominant vegetation types are sagebrush, greasewood and saltbush. Sagebrush covers approximately three-fourths of the planning unit.

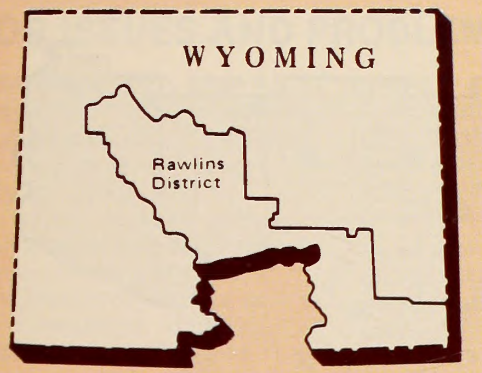
Large populations of wildlife inhabit the planning unit. Pronghorn antelope, mule deer and elk are the principal big game species. These highly significant wildlife values, coupled with open space and a sparse human population, figure prominently in the way of life enjoyed by area residents.

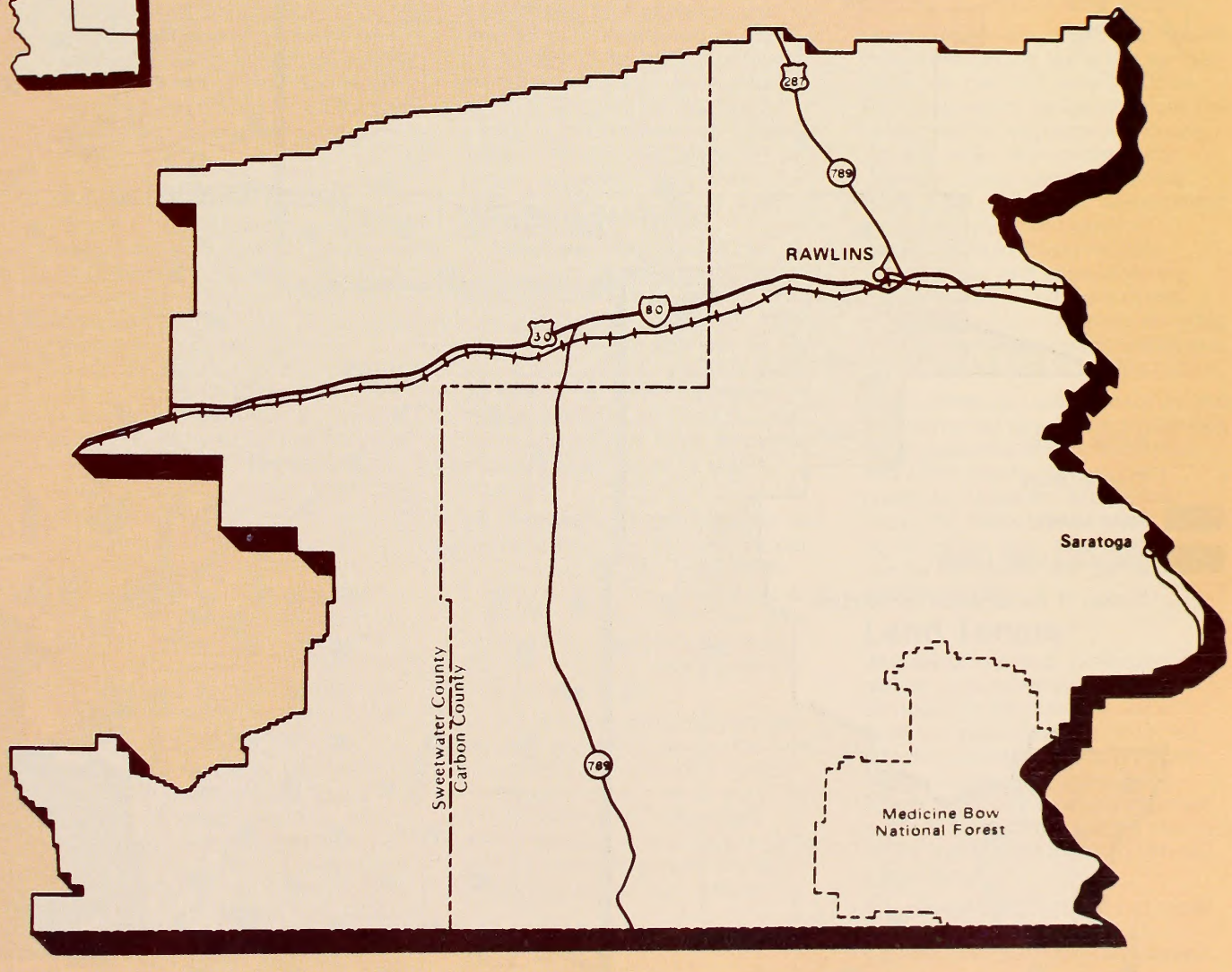
The Overland Planning Unit has a population density of slightly less than three people per square mile, compared with nearly four per square mile for the State. Rawlins, the largest community in the planning unit, has a population of approximately 12,000.

The local economy is heavily dependent on mineral production. A large part of the manufacturing sector of the economy is devoted to processing oil and gas. The economic dependence on minerals is increasing relative to the development of industries such as low sulphur coal, uranium and additional oil and gas deposits. The importance of energy minerals in the Overland Planning Unit to the local economy, as well as to the nation, is expected to continue long into the future.

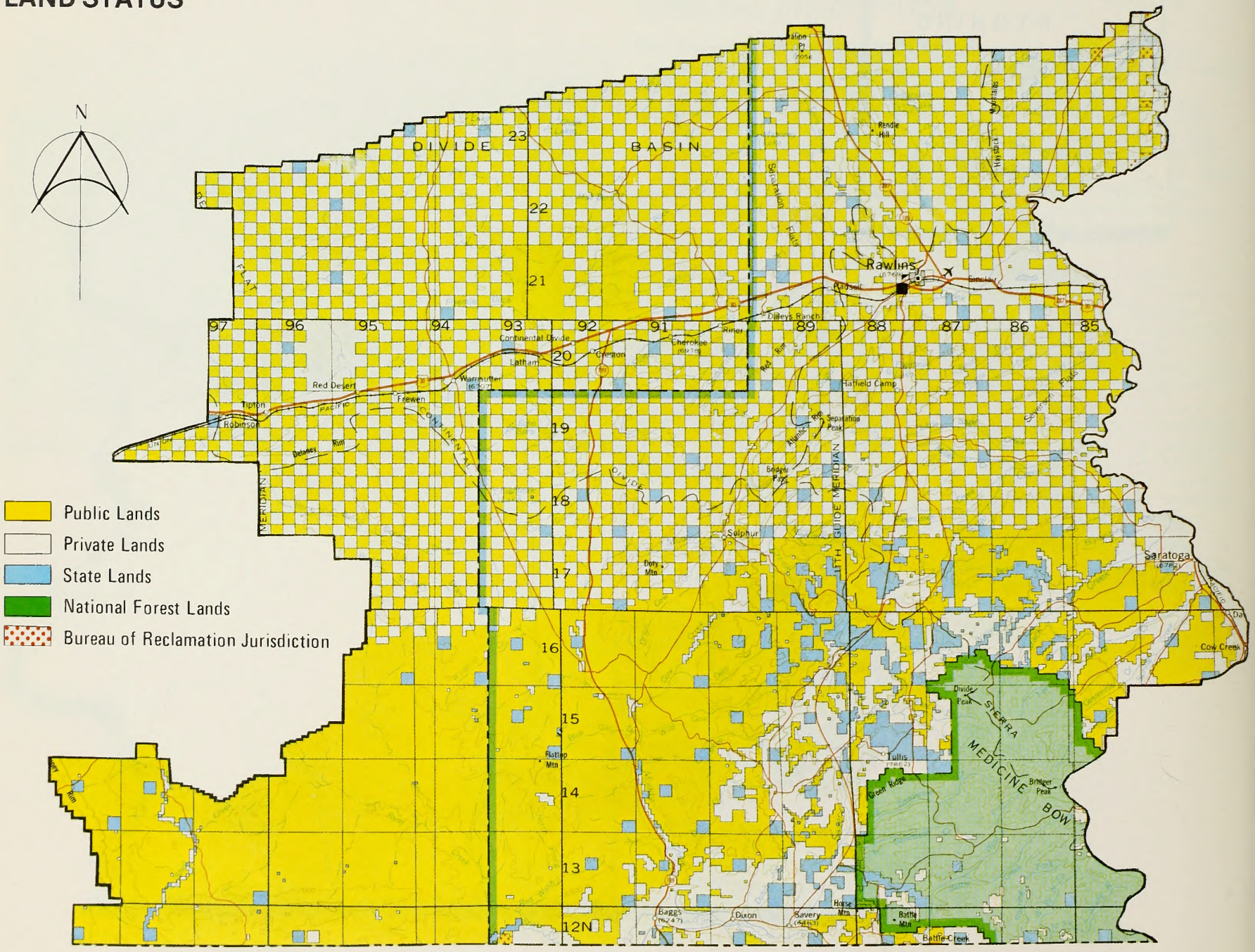
Other important sectors of the economy are agriculture, recreation and tourism, and transportation.

GENERAL LOCATION





LAND STATUS



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MAJOR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

(See Land Status Map, page 6.)

Major issues and problems receiving special attention during the planning process are summarized below. These issues reflect conflicts between land or resource uses, irreversible impacts of development on the environment and socio-economic effects of land use actions on local communities. Those issues addressed include coal leasing, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat management, land tenure, wild horse management, oil and gas leasing, Adobe Town natural values, Overland Trail and off-road vehicle use.

Coal Leasing

The mining industry has expressed an interest in 175,000 acres of potential coal resources south and west of Rawlins. The coal reserves in this area probably exceed 600 million tons of low sulfur high Btu coal. Leasing these areas would add significantly to the nation's domestic energy supply. Thousands of local jobs would be created by coal mining projects. Population influx would be dramatic. There would be enormous local revenues in terms of taxes, royalties and payrolls.

Many of these coal areas coincide with premium wildlife habitat areas for deer, elk, antelope and sage grouse. Many of the proposed coal lease areas from Atlantic Rim south to the Colorado border are crucial winter range for elk, deer and antelope. Loss of these areas, where forage is available due to low snowfall and windswept conditions, would affect game populations on a regional basis. Elk and deer in these winter ranges cannot tolerate the degree of human disturbance anticipated due to mining. Long term loss of habitat would occur from mining in areas of select vegetative cover such as aspen groves and bitter brush types. Reclamation of these areas with current rehabilitation methods would at best be questionable.

Resolution of conflicts between coal development, management of crucial wildlife habitat and protection of unique aesthetic values can only be accomplished by some degree of restriction on mining or reduction in wildlife populations and aesthetic values.

Livestock Grazing

Grazing on BLM lands is regulated by setting specific calendar periods for grazing and by specifying livestock numbers by allotment. Under this management the range condition has generally improved slightly to moderately during the past 40 years. There is an opportunity to improve management on 50 allotments by implementing grazing systems. This would accelerate improvement of range conditions and the production of additional forage.

Grazing systems normally require considerable fencing and water development so that forage can be utilized in a systematic manner to facilitate physiological needs of the plants being grazed. Improved range condition will normally benefit livestock, wild horses, watershed, wildlife and visual resources.

Range improvements, such as fences and water developments, cause impacts on other resources. Water distribution can influence the seasonal distribution of wildlife and wild horses and may result in more competition for forage. Fences may conflict with migration routes for wildlife and wild horses and can adversely affect open space and primitive values.

Many ranchers do not feel that intensive grazing systems, involving three to five separate pastures, can be economically adapted to their particular operations.

Under multiple use concepts, the intensity of the chosen grazing system must be weighed against the need for accelerated improvement of the range and the effects of fences and additional water developments on other resource values. Another priority is the ranchers' operational requirements as they relate to grazing systems.

Wildlife Habitat

The Overland Planning Unit has historically supported diversified and abundant wildlife populations. The most noted game species are antelope, elk, deer and sage grouse. The high quality wildlife habitat is due to the ideal arrangement of shelter, food, cover and water and the fact that crucial ranges have remained relatively undisturbed by man's activities.

Elk, deer and antelope ranges in the Overland Planning Unit are of local, regional and national importance. They have economic importance as a renewable resource and have great aesthetic and recreational values. Wildlife, in fact, is important to the western way of life.

Of the three big game species (elk, antelope and deer), elk are the most susceptible to human disturbance resulting from such major activities as coal mining and oil and gas drilling. Mule deer are second since present technology makes it very difficult to restore their habitat if major surface disturbance has occurred. Antelope are the most adaptable of the big game species. They are able to tolerate most mining activity. Most of the surface-disturbing activities occurring in the Overland Planning Unit have the potential to affect wildlife habitat.

Good range management that results in improvement of the range for livestock use can also benefit wildlife. Poorly placed or designed fences can hinder wildlife migration and poorly located water developments can degrade crucial wildlife wintering areas. Coal, oil and gas development can adversely affect wildlife if implemented in crucial wildlife habitat areas or if allowed during critical seasons in the life cycles. Human population densities resulting from energy development will have a permanent impact on wildlife habitat.

Much of the potential damage to wildlife from other program activities can be mitigated by use of restrictions and other proven management practices. However, accelerated programs, especially as now occurring for coal, oil and gas, will reduce the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat.

Land Tenure

With pending energy development activity, it is expected that most of the towns in the planning unit will double in population. Communities affected include Rawlins, Saratoga, Baggs, Wamsutter, Sinclair and Savery. Public lands surround most of these communities. More than half of the lands in the planning unit are public lands.

Approximately 1,900 acres of public lands have been identified as valuable for community expansion

over the next 20 years, mostly around Rawlins. The lands identified for this use are currently used for antelope habitat and livestock grazing. Disposal of these lands would result in only minor conflicts while non-disposal would increase impacts on other resources by encouraging greater community sprawl or development of new towns.

Wild Horse Management

The Overland Planning Unit supports a population of approximately 1,700 wild horses. Some 600 of these wild horses are located in the checkerboard land pattern south of Interstate 80. The remainder is south of the checkerboard with the highest concentrations located in the Adobe Town area in the southwest corner of the unit. Wild horse herds are increasing by approximately 20% per year.

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 provides for managing horses in refuges or as part of a multiple use complex with numbers based on other resource uses and carrying capacity of the range. Maintenance of wild horse populations in the checkerboard land pattern (45% of the planning unit) will require approval of the private landowners. Because of the problems involved in controlling populations and migrations, this approval is not expected. An alternative would be to establish a wild horse range in the Adobe Town area at the expense of other resource uses such as wildlife and livestock grazing. The public is not in favor of this proposal.

With an expanding population, wild horses are competing directly with domestic livestock and wildlife for available forage and water. At the present time virtually no allocations for forage have been made on grazing allotments for wild horses. Voluntary non-use by livestock operators has thus far prevented overgrazing and subsequent competition between the various forage consumers.

Methods of population control have to date been expensive and inadequate. Significant competition between wildlife, livestock and wild horses is foreseen in the near future even if control measures could be initiated immediately.

Indications are that the public does not benefit, based on a recreation viewpoint, from wild horse herd management. For instance, most persons cannot readily distinguish between wild and domestic horses. In addition, many westerners are familiar with the horses' recent domestic background, which detracts from the romanticism with which they are associated at a national level.

Oil and Gas Leasing

Approximately 90% of the public lands in the Overland Planning Unit are presently under oil and gas lease. The main areas of intense oil and gas exploration drilling are confined to the areas near Hay Reservoir, Barrel Spring, Wamsutter, Flat Top and Deep Gulch. In 1975, 173 wells in 25 fields produced 499,935 barrels of oil and 41.8 trillion cubic feet of gas from all lands in the Overland Planning Unit. Exploration is intensifying. Drilling activity has more than doubled in the past year and will continue at an accelerated rate.

Oil and gas drilling and production impact watershed values, cultural values and aesthetics to a minor degree. Of greater consequence are effects on wildlife populations and their habitat. Drilling is a temporary situation, while production results in permanent roads, traffic and pipelines. Such disturbance is most significant in crucial wintering areas for elk and deer or in raptor or sage grouse nesting areas.

Impacts on wildlife habitats, watersheds, historical and cultural values and other resources can be generally mitigated through control of drilling periods, location and access. For instance, drilling can be prohibited in elk wintering ranges during periods of use.

Adobe Town Natural Area Proposal

Adobe Town is located approximately 65 miles southwest of Rawlins in the extreme southwest corner of the planning unit. The general area is characterized by "badlands" formations created by wind and water over geologic time. It is relatively free of man's intrusion and has wild and scenic character. The area is rich in archeological values and supports a variety of wildlife species. It also has one of the highest wild horse concentrations in Wyoming.

The area is leased for oil and gas exploration and production. Some drilling is now occurring. Restricting commercial activities is not legal at this time. The majority of public opinion obtained at MFP workshops does not favor totally excluding other uses to preserve unique value.

Overland Trail

The Overland Trail crosses the planning unit with approximately 30 miles of the trail on public lands. The trail crosses the high plain, sagebrush-grassland country generally paralleling I-80 some 12 miles to the south. This major stage line, freight route and mail line of the 1860's was a significant factor in settling the West.

Only ten short segments of the trail have been identified as being in good condition with readily distinguishable ruts. The Sage Creek, Washakie and Duck Lake stations are located on public land and have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The Bridger Pass site is presently on the Register.

Protection and preservation of these trail segments as part of our national heritage would not significantly affect other land uses or resource programs. However, protection of the total trail could result in many limitations being placed on other activities across the entire planning unit.

Off-Road Vehicle Use

Currently off-road vehicle (ORV) use on the public land is widespread and unrestricted. The number and type of ORVs owned by the public are increasing at a rapid rate. Four-wheel drive and motorcycle operators are increasing the road networks into undisturbed areas at an accelerated rate. Some limitations of ORV use are being considered to minimize disturbance to wildlife on seasonal ranges, to prevent watershed damage and to protect cultural, natural and aesthetic values. Initial areas under consideration are Adobe Town and some of the larger blocks of public land southwest of Rawlins.

Looking west along the Overland Trail from Highway 789, south of Creston Junction. This is one of 10 stretches of the old trail yet preserved.

LANDS

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

(See Lands Map, page 11.)

In this section, the significant land use decisions are highlighted for each program activity. These decisions pertain to the preceding issues as well as some of the more significant parts of each program. The management decisions are presented by description, multiple use objectives and decisions. The rationale for each decision is also provided. A complete list of decisions is available to the public at the Rawlins District Office.

Program Description

The lands program includes land use planning for community, industrial, commercial, residential and other intensive land uses: sale of lands; issuance of leases, permits and rights-of-way; satisfying state indemnity rights such as for school lands; exchanging lands with private landowners, providing lands for various public purposes (i.e., recreation sites, airports, sanitary landfills) to state and local governments or other non-profit entities and withdrawal of areas from certain uses in order to protect unique or special values such as natural, primitive or wild and scenic river areas.

Resource Description

The total area of the Planning Unit is 3,242,130 acres. Of this, nearly 58% or 1,894,644 acres are public lands, 38% or 1,246,341 acres are private property and the remaining 4% or 101,055 acres are state-owned land. Land ownership patterns range from widely scattered tracts of public lands along the forest fringe and Little Snake River area to well blocked areas. A checkerboard land pattern exists for 20 miles on each side of the Union Pacific Railroad.

With the high percentage of public lands and its frequent strategic location, there are demands for disposal to meet the needs of other governmental agencies, private individuals and industrial or utility companies.

Projected growth in population, primarily from energy development, indicates a need for public lands to provide growing room for communities. Additional land will also be needed for facilities such as airports, parks, water facilities and rights-of-way for pipelines, power lines and roads.

Industrial development will result in areas being mined as well as sites for offices, processing plants, loading facilities, etc.

The proposed Savery-Pothook project will need public lands for the dam site, irrigation ditches, agricultural lands and office buildings.

Multiple Use Objective

Make public lands available to meet the needs of the public for community expansion, industrial development, public purposes and agricultural use while considering other resource values, and to support other programs, i.e., rights-of-way, withdrawals and exchanges.

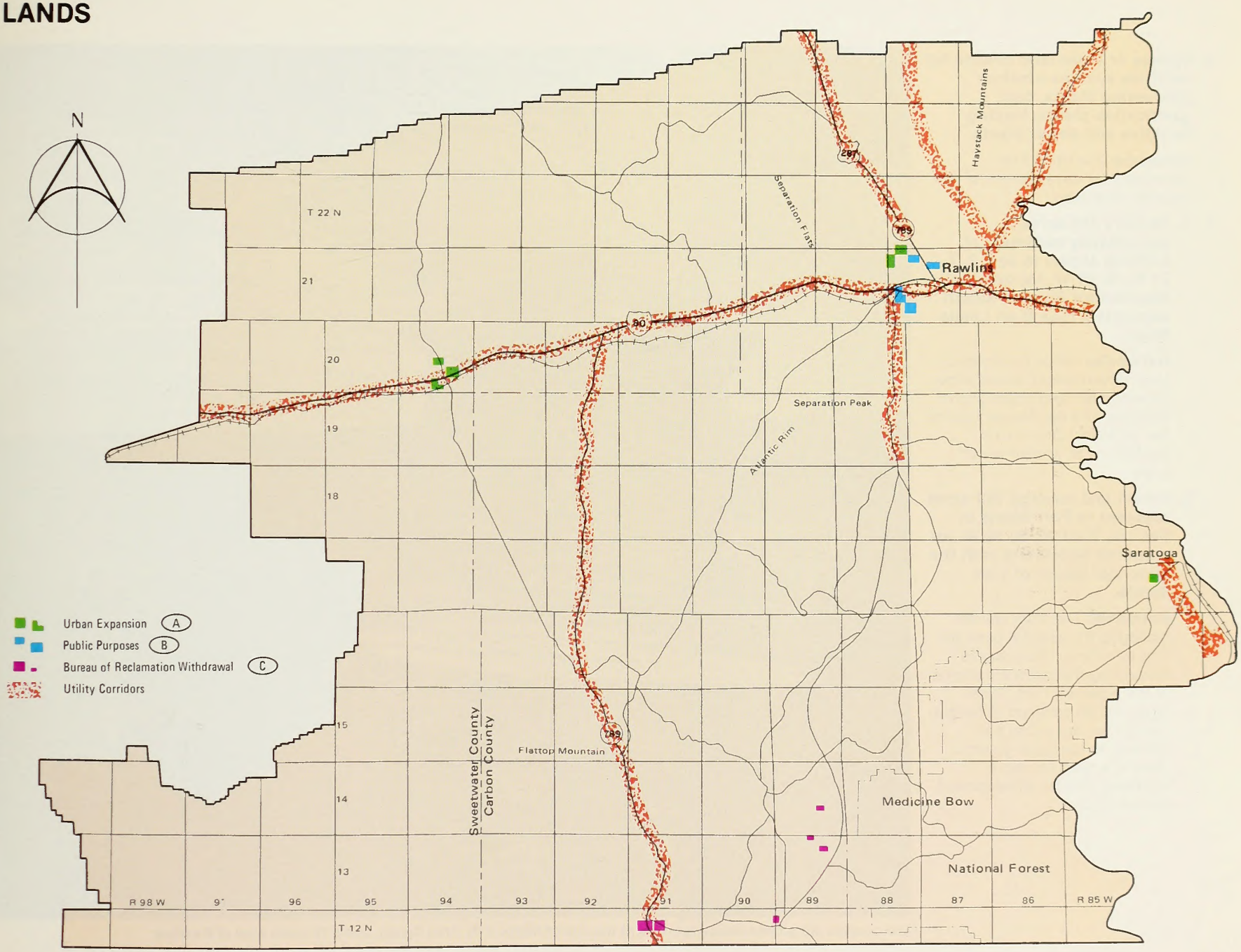
Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Provide 1900-plus acres for community expansion. (See A on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: Disposal of these areas for community expansion would promote orderly development of existing communities and discourage a "new town" policy. Only minor impacts on other resources would result.

As an incentive to help open the west, the Union Pacific was granted every other section of public land along the tracks . . . creating a 40-mile wide management problem, for private owners as well as the public.

LANDS



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2. **Convey or lease land needed for facilities such as uranium processing plants, coal gasification plants, loading facilities and power plants.**

   Rationale: Facilities are necessary for development of the mineral resources.

3. a. **Reserve 320 acres immediately northeast of existing airport in Sec. 2, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for eventual disposal for Rawlins airport expansion. (See B on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: Lands provided to local governments would allow development and upgrading of facilities at a decreased cost to the taxpayer. Only minor conflicts with wildlife would arise.

   b. **Retain and manage 560 acres adjacent to Fort Steele in Sec. 22, T. 21 N., R. 85 W. for purposes consistent with the historical theme of Fort Steele.**

   Rationale: The tract will be managed for multiple uses but first priority will be given to supporting the historical theme of the adjacent Fort. These lands will be retained in federal ownership, but subject to transfer to the local government if a need for more intensive historic development should occur.

The durable old powderhouse remains at the site of historic Ft. Fred Steele, some 18 miles east of Rawlins.

c. **Reserve 200 acres in Sec. 4, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for recreation and public purposes to meet demands as Rawlins grows northward. (See B on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: As the city grows, demands for a park may materialize. Only minor conflicts exist with other resources.

d. **Retain and manage in its natural state the unique conifer site adjacent to Highway 287 approximately 9 miles north of Rawlins.**

   Rationale: This site has been recommended for a roadside county park. The District multiple use advisory board advised that such development might damage this unique stand of ponderosa pine located on high desert plains and recommended preservation for aesthetic values.

e. **Reserve 200 acres in Sec. 20, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for a city water filtration plant. (See B on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: This tract of land located south of Rawlins may be needed for city facilities.

f. **Reserve Section 28, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for the future Wyoming State Penitentiary. (See B on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: This tract was identified as the best available site by Wyoming State and BLM officials.

4. **Allow withdrawal of 700 acres for the Savery-Pothook project for dam and reservoir, maintenance headquarters and agricultural purposes. (See C on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: These are small isolated tracts used for livestock and wildlife grazing. The economics of agricultural development overshadows economic benefits of grazing.

5. **Concentrate utilities in identified corridors whenever feasible. (See Utility Corridors on Lands Map.)**

   Rationale: Numerous utility rights-of-way presently exist in the corridors. Continued use, with proper stipulations to grants, will have minor impacts.

Note: Variances from Carbon County Zoning Ordinances for all decisions will be coordinated with the county. Conflicts with wildlife on crucial ranges and visual intrusions are to be considered in the stipulations.

MINERALS

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Program Description

The mineral program includes disposing of minerals by lease, license and permit; coordinating exploration and mining activities with other land uses; and providing protection and rehabilitation of mined land as well as adjudicating mineral patent applications, economic analysis and appraisal. Minerals on the public lands are categorized as follows:

Locatable—Those minerals that may be staked and claimed under the General Mining Law of 1872, i.e., gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, and uranium.

Leasable—Minerals subject to leasing under the Minerals Leasing Act of 1920 including oil and gas, coal, oil shale, phosphate, sodium, potassium and geothermal resources.

Salable—Materials sold under the Materials Sale Act of 1947 including common varieties of stone, scoria, sand and gravel.

COAL

(See Coal Leasing Map, page 15.)

Resource Description

Coal is present throughout the greater part of the Overland Planning Unit in many different geologic formations. Most of the known coal is bituminous, sub-bituminous or lignite, depending on its chemical make up. All are called soft coal with lignite being the softest.

Coal mining by underground methods began in the area in 1863 near Sulphur. The Nebraska mine just south of Rawlins reportedly operated from about 1900 to 1945.

Coal deposits are found in the following geographic areas:

1. North of I-80 within the checkerboard and west from the Platte River to the district boundary (excluding the Red Desert area).
2. Red Desert — adjacent to Wamsutter.
3. Cherokee.
4. Red Rim.
5. North Knobs and Continental Divide.
6. China Butte.
7. Atlantic Rim.
8. Cow Creek Complex — including Cow Creek, Stagecoach, Cow Creek Buttes, Muddy, Sand Hills and Cedars.
9. Savery Preference Right Area.
10. Kindt Basin (southeast of Rawlins).

With the exception of the Cow Creek Complex and the Savery Preference Right Area, the land pattern in the above areas is checkerboard. The U.S. usually owns the even-numbered sections while the odd-numbered sections are privately owned. The mineral rights under these odd-numbered sections are almost exclusively controlled by the Union Pacific Corporation, its subsidiaries or business associates.

Exploration drilling, sampling and evaluation of coal has occurred, but not to the same degree of detail in all areas. Therefore, not as much is known about the coal resource in areas 1, 2, 8, 9 and 10 as in the other areas. From the information on hand, it is known that much of the coal is of relatively high quality, i.e., ash content ranges from 5.8% to 19.5%, Btus per pound vary from 5,084 to 12,000 and sulphur content averages from 0.25% to 2.1%.

The coal is usually found in multiple beds of varying thickness, ranging from 14 inches to 30 feet. Many of these beds are tilted from the horizontal. This tilt or dip ranges from a few degrees to as much as 75°. A greater dip indicates that surface mining may be more difficult. Some of the coal north of I-80 is believed to be "contaminated" with uranium.

A total of 135,123 acres was nominated for coal leasing by industry in 1976. In the same process, it was recommended by other interest groups that 32,370 acres in the same area not be leased for coal.

The total amount of coal reserves in the areas identified above is unknown due to the incompleteness of the inventory and exploration. *The only information on reserves comes from specific mine proposals.* This data shows a total of 475 million tons of coal known at this time. The Cherokee Tract is presently under lease to Pacific Power and Light and contains reserves estimated at 250 million tons (included in total).

The Savery Preference Right Tract is an area of 31,000 acres of largely public minerals under private surface for which reserves are estimated at 160 million tons or more. The U.S. may have a contractual obligation to issue a lease for this area upon perfection of an application and acceptance of terms of the lease by the company. This obligation exists due to the requirements of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 under which the applicant was authorized to prospect for the coal in 1966-1967.

Multiple Use Objective

Allow leasing of coal to assist the nation in meeting its energy needs of becoming more energy self-sufficient by 1985, while providing adequate environmental safeguards and strict rehabilitation standards.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Subject to the findings of the regional coal environmental statement, offer the areas shown in Table 1 for coal leasing: Specify underground mining where feasible.**

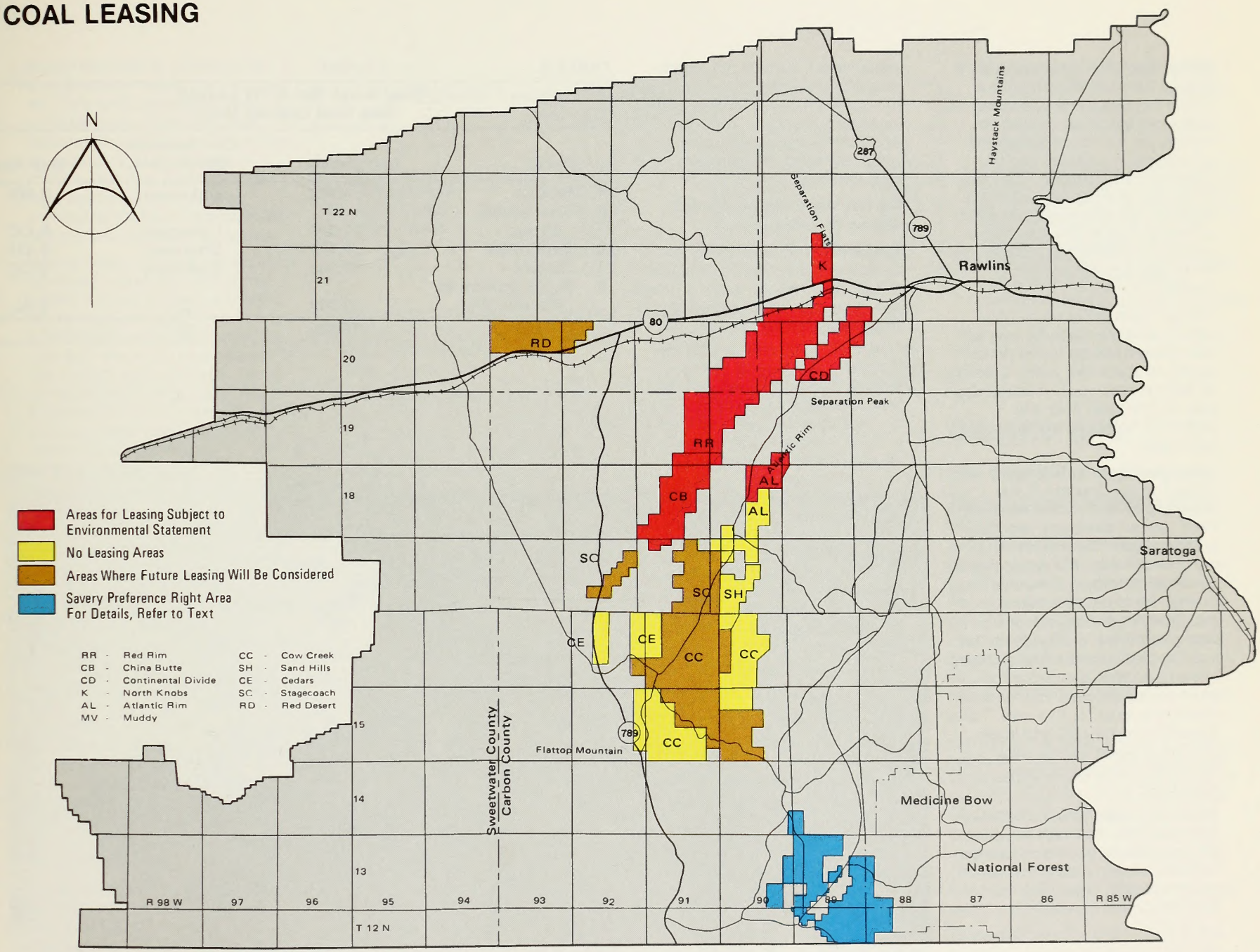
TABLE 1

Areas for Coal Leasing (See Coal Leasing Map)

Tract	Acres	Est. Reserves Million Tons	Map Ref.
1. Red Rim	17,917	60	A-RR
2. China Butte	6,080	103	A-CB
3. Continental Divide	3,480	10	A-CD
4. North Knobs	2,240	6	A-K
5. North portion of Atlantic Rim	2,521[1]	23	A-AL
Total	32,238	202	

[1]Includes 640 acres of surface estate only.

COAL LEASING



(For Details See Pages 12,14,and 15)

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Rationale: With increased coal leasing the country can draw closer to energy self-sufficiency. A shift from petroleum to coal is needed for electrical generation so petroleum reserves can be used for transportation. The coal in the above areas will assist the nation in becoming self-sufficient in energy and, at the same time, contribute to better air quality due to the low sulphur and ash content.

Energy needs must be planned well in advance. Leasing now will add needed energy to the nation's supply in about five years. Leasing of federal coal would mean added jobs for the local area and additional revenues to the county and state.

Areas identified for leasing, subject to the findings of the regional coal environmental statement, are all within the checkerboard pattern. The private minerals on alternate sections are controlled by Rocky Mountain Energy Company. It is highly probable that the private coal would be mined, even without the intermingled federal leases. Mining plans have been submitted for each proposed lease and markets apparently exist for this coal. To mine the private coal and leave the intermingled federal coal would be a waste of energy resources.

Based on present mining plans, approximately 1,400 acres would be disturbed as well as reclaimed annually when mines are in full operation. With improving technology and careful reclamation, surface production capacity should be restored. There are some crucial antelope habitat located in the area. However, antelope have been found to be relatively adaptable and tolerant of coal mining activity.

2. **Do not lease the coal areas shown in Table 2:**

Rationale: The Muddy and the Cedars areas contain substantial crucial deer habitat. Parts of these two areas are within a county-designated scenic corridor. The

TABLE 2

Coal Areas Not to Be Leased (See Coal Leasing Map)			
Tract	**Acres**	**Est. Reserves Million Tons**	**Map Ref.**
1. Muddy	1,700	Unknown	B-MV
2. Cow Creek Buttes	31,360	Unknown	B-CC
3. Sand Hills	5,120	Unknown	B-SH
4. Cedars	7,680	Unknown	B-CE
5. South portion of Atlantic Rim	3,806	23	B-AL
Total	49,666	23+	

The wary antelope can tolerate better than elk the intrusion of men and industry.

Sand Hills area is classified as crucial winter habitat for deer and elk. This area possesses very unstable soils. The Cow Creek Butte area contains crucial winter elk habitat. The south part of Atlantic Rim has unstable soils, high scenic values, contains crucial elk habitat and possesses historic and recreational values.

Mining these tracts would result in significant conflicts. Use of the habitat crucial for deer and elk would in all probability result in wildlife population reductions. Elk and deer are much less tolerant of this activity than antelope. There are also lesser amounts of crucial habitat available to them. The unstable soils in the two areas would make successful rehabilitation extremely difficult.

Mining within the scenic corridor would be inconsistent with the purposes for which the corridor was established. Mining the south part of Atlantic Rim, in addition to the impacts on wildlife habitat, would adversely affect the use and appreciation of the area for its scenic, historic and other recreational values.

3. **Consider leasing the areas in Table 3, subject to: the acquisition of more specific information on the amount and distribution of the coal resource, a showing of demand, the development of specific mining proposals and further identification of crucial wildlife habitat locations.**

Rationale: Overriding conflicts between mining and other resource values and uses are not now apparent in this area, but there is not enough information available to justify leasing. The amount and distribution of coal is not known. No mining plans have been filed and there is no apparent demand.

A decision to lease or not lease will be made when more specific information is available. This would allow an assessment of prospective resource conflicts.

TABLE 3

Potential Leasing Areas (subject to additional data)
(See coal Leasing Map)

Tract	Acres	Est. Reserves Million Tons	Map Ref.
1. Stagecoach	10,240	Unknown	C-SC
2. Cow Creek	37,760	Unknown	C-CC
3. Red Desert	7,040	Unknown	C-RD
Total	55,040		

4. **Lease the Savery Preference Right Lease Area upon perfection of an application and acceptance of lease terms by the applicant.**

Acres
31,000

Est. Reserves
160 million tons

Map Reference
D-SAV

Rationale: Based on the present interpretation of the Department's contractual obligations when the prospecting permits were issued, no option exists but to lease this coal on perfection of an application and acceptance by the applicant of the lease terms.

5. **The balance of the known coal areas is not considered for leasing at this time. This is due to a lack of specific information on the coal, the fact that some of it is high in sulphur, some may be contaminated by uranium and because no demand for the coal exists at this time. The issuance of exploration permits in these areas will be considered subject to technical exams for disturbance to other resource values and environmental assessment. Provisions should be included to limit drilling activity on crucial habitats to the same dates as the oil and gas drilling.**

Rationale: Not enough information is available on the character, distribution and amount of coal resources in these areas to permit identification of prospective resource conflicts. Due to the continuing need for energy resources and the necessity to weigh mining in one area against another, it is in the public interest to permit regulated exploration drilling.

6. **Consult with involved private surface owners in the location of rights-of-way and development of rehabilitation measures.**

Rationale: Private surface owners usually have first-hand knowledge of the area. They also have needs, ideas and property rights that should be considered in determining rights-of-way location and where the reclamation measures will be applied to private lands.

OIL AND GAS

(See Oil and Gas Map, page 19.)

Resource Description

Oil and gas exploration and production occurs throughout the planning unit with a concentration of activity located southwest of Rawlins. The only sizable area in the unit not being actively explored is the south-east corner which is not believed to possess favorable geologic structure. Ninety percent of the public lands in the unit have been leased for oil and gas.

Exploration is continuing at a rapid pace. In fiscal year 1976 there were 20 separate exploration operations in the unit, resulting in the geophysical exploration of 500 miles of line. Drilling intensity has increased markedly since the beginning of the energy crisis. In fiscal year 1976 there were 42 wells drilled in the unit, with 19 producers.

Table 4 shows the production in the planning unit for 1974 and 1975 for all lands private, state and federal.

TABLE 4

Oil Production 1974-75				
Year	No. of Fields	No. of Wells	Barrels of Oil	MCF[1] Gas
1974	23	158	1,028,816	38,941,787
1975	25	173	499,935	41,848,696
CUMULATIVE PRODUCTION				
Oil (Barrels)			Gas (MCF)[1]	
22,330,477			508,792,083	

[1]Thousands of cubic feet.

Multiple Use Objective

Make lands available for oil and gas exploration and development to contribute to the nation in becoming more energy self-sufficient by 1985; minimize impacts on other resources; protect other resources with overriding values and require adequate rehabilitation.

Multiple Use Decisions

Allow oil and gas exploration and development throughout the unit with the following exceptions and restrictions on new leases:*

1. **No surface occupancy or disturbance on specified historic and recreation sites.**
2. **No surface occupancy or disturbance on the actual Overland Trail ruts and selected associated historic sites. A strip one-half mile wide on each side of well-preserved portions of the trail center or the visible horizon, whichever is closer, will be reserved from occupancy.**
3. **Exploration drilling will be allowed from April 15 to December 15 on specified crucial big game winter ranges; from June 30 to March 15 in specified sage grouse strutting and nesting areas and from June 30 to May 1 in specified raptor nesting areas except as otherwise permitted by the authorized officer. Exceptions will be authorized when impacts on the crucial ranges will not be significant.**

*These restrictions are not applicable to geophysical operations.

Rationale: Oil and gas exploration and development have been conducted in the Overland Planning Unit for approximately 40 years. They have been a mainstay of the local economy for many years, providing income and employment to Carbon and Sweetwater County residents and needed energy supplies for local and regional consumption.

In order to meet local, state and national demand and to meet the national commitment of greater self-sufficiency by 1985, new sources of petroleum must be discovered. Present knowledge of the geology in the planning unit indicates that there is a good possibility of finding new petroleum reservoirs that will help meet the present and future demands of the country.

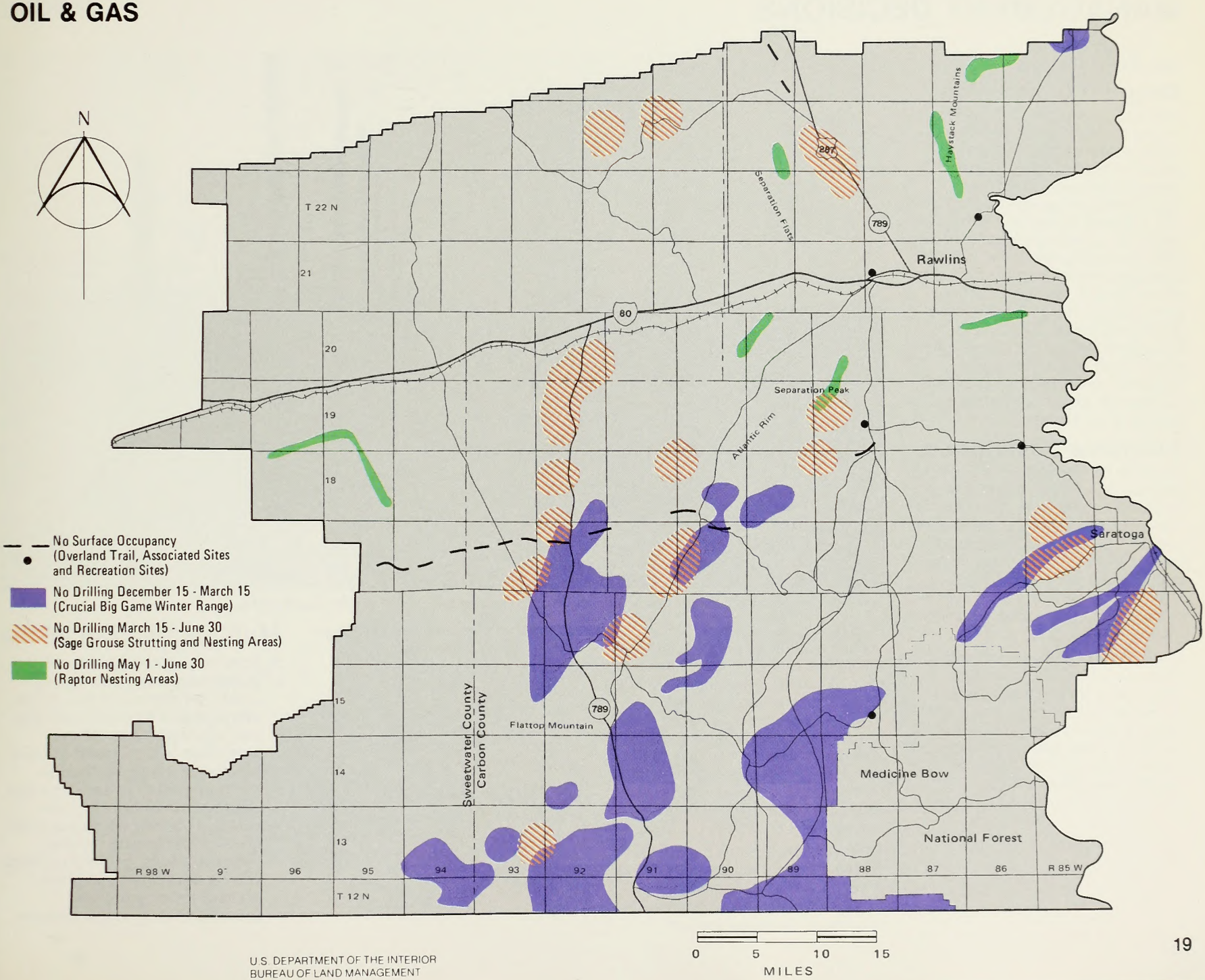
Exploration is intensifying and drilling activity has more than doubled in the past year. An exploration program of approximately the present intensity is expected to continue for some years to come.

Drilling activity, depending on its proximity to a historic or recreation site, can result in surface disturbance noise and activity that is inconsistent with the use of these areas for educational, interpretation and recreational purposes. It is likely that by moving a proposed well site a few hundred feet, the above impacts could be eliminated for the most part.

The Overland Trail and associated structures are nationally significant historic resources. Only small portions within the unit are well preserved (less than 15 miles). Two stage stations have potential for interpretation — one on the Overland Trail and the other on the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Trail. These stations, with selected trail sections, have potential for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Bridger Pass site is presently on the Register. Drilling and production close to the trail are not consistent with the historic or early pioneer theme and, in some cases, can result in destruction of the resource. These restrictions will protect only significant sites and trail sections from surface disturbance and destruction.

Drilling activity, the associated noise, people and vehicle movements can have adverse survival and reproduction impacts on wildlife in their crucial habitats at the most critical time of year. Effects can include habitat (winter range, nests, strutting grounds) being abandoned, unsuccessful reproduction and, in some cases, reductions in population levels. The restriction on time of drilling in selected crucial and nesting areas will minimize the chances of serious disturbance while still providing for exploration during most of the year.

OIL & GAS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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RANGE MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

(See Range Map, page 21.)

Program Description

The range management program includes inventory, evaluation and management of the vegetative resource on public lands as used by domestic livestock, wild horses, burros and other grazing animals. The program involves authorizing and supervising grazing use, developing and maintaining supporting livestock management facilities and protecting the range from weed infestations, pests and diseases. The Bureau is developing livestock grazing management plans for the majority of public lands and is planning to complete environmental statements on all lands where domestic livestock grazing is authorized.

Resource Description

Currently 91 ranch operators use five Section 15 leases and 154 Section 3 allotments. Both cattle and sheep use the allotments at various times of the year. A total of 252,021 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) are licensed in the unit. Grazing use on BLM public lands is regulated by setting specific grazing dates and livestock numbers by allotment.

Under present management, the range condition has generally improved slightly to moderately during the past 20 to 40 years. Within the Overland Planning Unit there are currently seven allotments which are being managed under Allotment Management Plans (AMPs).

Livestock fencing such as this can be an obstacle to management of wild horses and wildlife.

Livestock management is complicated by several problems. Heavy use is occurring around water sources and in meadows. There is a lack of reliable water sources. Fences for livestock management interfere with movement of wild horses and wildlife. Very low forage allocations have been made for wild horses and wildlife. The checkerboard land pattern also creates management problems.

Approximately 90% of the area is covered with shrub vegetation, 72% is sagebrush with accompanying grass, 10% is greasewood and 8% is saltbush. No threatened or endangered plant species are known to exist within the unit.

In the past, sagebrush spraying or plowing and seeding projects have been completed on various allotments. These practices have increased grass production an average of 3 to 4 times.

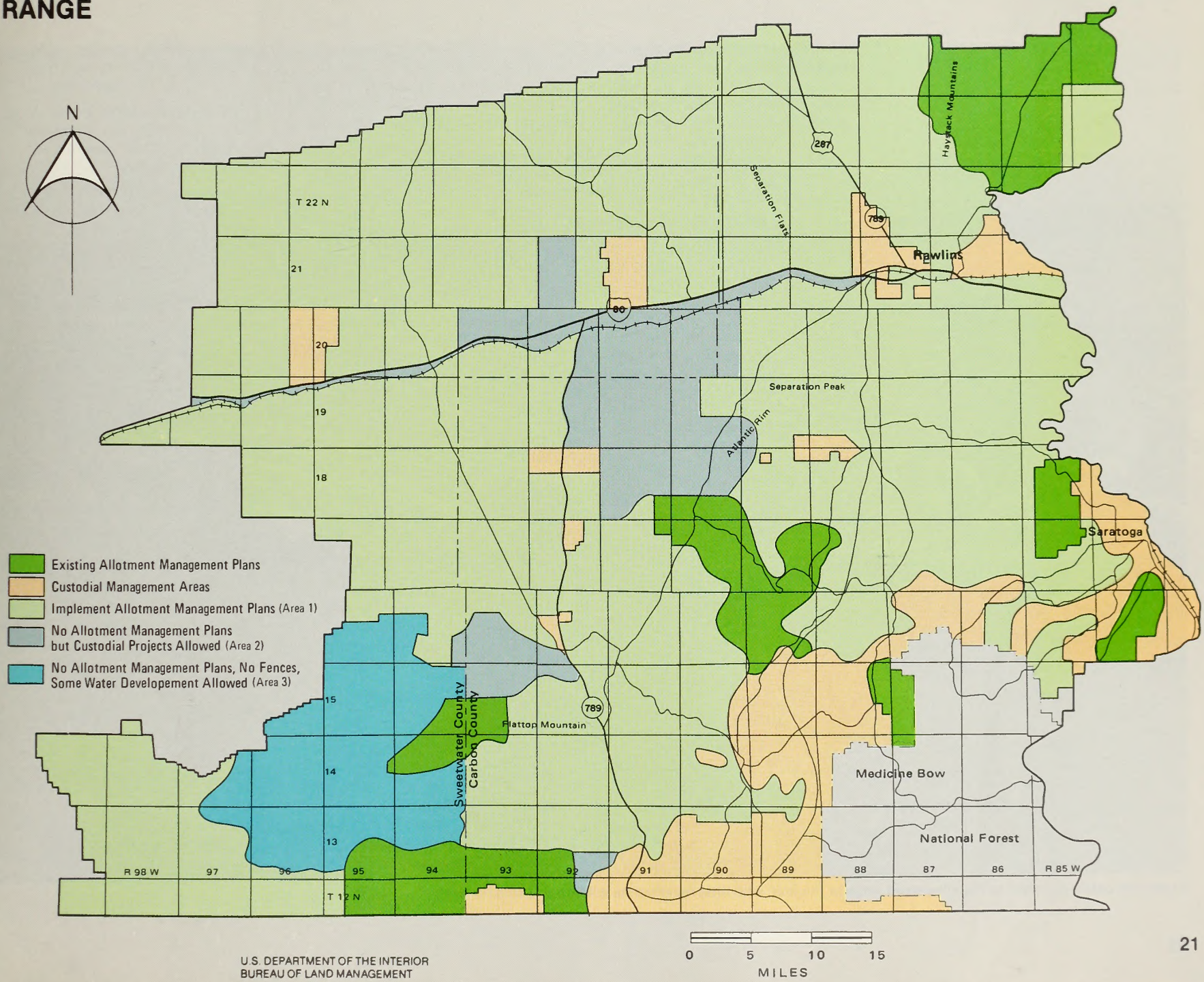
Multiple Use Objective

Manage livestock to not only increase available forage, but also to improve wildlife habitat, watershed and other resources.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **In Area 1, initiate AMPs. When possible, several allotments under the control of one range operator will be combined into one grazing system. Consideration will be given to combining the small allotments north and west of Saratoga into larger allotments, using the existing allotments as pastures. On allotments with existing pasture fences, grazing systems will be developed using the present fencing pattern. Specific criteria are as follows:**

RANGE



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Sheep and cattle use most of the allocated forage in the unit, with little reserved for wildlife and wild horses.

a. **Work closely with operators, particularly in the checkerboard area.**

b. **Fencing will be kept to an absolute minimum, particularly north of Interstate 80. Unnecessary fences will be removed.**

c. **Water will be developed to improve utilization. Intensive water development will not be allowed in critical antelope winter range.**

d. **Pursue deferred rotation grazing unless resource problems dictate a rest rotation system.**

In Area 2, AMPs will not be initiated. Custodial projects such as minor fencing and water development will be allowed to improve grazing utilization.

In Area 3 (Adobe Town), AMPs will not be initiated. No new fences will be constructed. Water may be developed if it does not have significant effects on natural or primitive values.

Rationale: Developing AMPs on the entire planning unit cannot be accomplished without major conflicts with other resource values. Present range condition and trends do not support the concept of developing intensive grazing management over the entire unit.

The Overland Planning Unit is primarily of a northern desert shrub vegetative association. The climatic factors are harsh with a very short growing season coupled with semi-arid conditions. Significant responses to intensive grazing systems will no doubt take many years. It is questionable if rest rotation grazing offers any advantages over deferred rotation systems, or deferred turnout, particularly considering Wyoming's brief growing season. Deferred grazing can also accommodate more effectively the flexibility that the livestock operators desire in this area.

Management facilities required to implement a grazing system are the primary cause of impacts on other resources. Water development can influence the seasonal distribution of wildlife and wild horses. Fences may conflict with migration of wildlife as well as wild horses and can adversely affect open space and primitive values.

Area 2 encompasses primarily those areas that will be leased for coal mining. Development of management plans and installation of necessary management facilities would be premature until mining is completed.

Installation of management plans in the Adobe Town area may adversely affect the natural or primitive values.

Public opinion opposes rest rotation and major fence construction within the planning unit.

2. **Leave 75 allotments in a custodial management status. Encourage the Soil Conservation Service to develop management plans on those areas in conjunction with private landowners.**

   Rationale: While these allotments do not meet the criteria for intensive management, it is proper and desirable to maintain range condition, watershed values and wildlife habitat in these areas. Since extensive private land is involved, a grazing system with SCS involvement is appropriate.

3. **Decisions on sagebrush control will be made on a case-by-case basis after development of an AMP. Normally no control will be approved in sage grouse nesting areas, crucial deer or antelope winter range or in Class A scenic areas.**

   Rationale: This approach will ensure that minimal impacts on other resources occur from sagebrush control programs.

WILD FREE-ROAMING HORSES

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

(See Wild Horse Map, page 25.)

Program Description

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 gave the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture jurisdiction of wild, free-roaming horses and burros. Since passage of the law, the horse populations have expanded. BLM does not have the capability to develop herd management plans and implement control measures for wild horse populations. Forage requirements for wild horses must be considered along with the needs of wildlife and livestock. A part of herd management is the roundup and disposal of horses in areas where horses are in trespass on private property, where populations are in excess of available habitat, or where horses are claimed by private individuals. BLM disposes of wild horses primarily through the Adopt-a-Horse program which allows qualified individuals personal use of an animal. Removing excess horses from the range helps assure an adequate food supply for the remainder of the herd.

Resource Description

Two wild horse concentrations are located south of Interstate 80. One area includes Atlantic Rim, Doty Mountain-Flat Top, while the other area is Adobe Town. In early 1976, more than 1,002 wild horses were counted west of Highway 789 and 667 horses were counted east of the Highway. These wild horses consume approximately 20,000 AUMs annually. Herd populations are increasing at approximately 20% per year.

Approximately 600 of the wild horses are on the checkerboard land pattern south of Interstate 80. The rest are located south of the checkerboard with the highest concentrations in the Adobe Town area in the southwest corner of the unit.

Establishing wild horse herd management areas in the checkerboard (45% of the planning unit) will require approval by the private landowners. Private landowners are not favorable to establishing horse management areas in the checkerboard, but rather are in the process of requesting complete removal.

Wild horses compete directly with domestic livestock and wildlife for available forage and water. Competition will continue in the near future, even if control measures are initiated immediately. At the present time virtually no forage allocations for wild horses have been made on grazing allotments. Voluntary non-use by livestock operators has prevented overgrazing and subsequent competition between the various forage consumers. Methods of population control have been expensive and inadequate.

Indications are that the visiting Wyoming public is not benefiting from wild horse herd management. Most cannot distinguish between wild and domestic horses and many are familiar with the horses' recent domestic background.

Multiple Use Objective

Manage wild horses as a component of the environment; with reductions in population levels consistent with other multiple use values and in accordance with the management plan to be developed for wild horses.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Allocate 6,000 AUMs of forage and write a wild horse management plan in cooperation with the Rock Springs District for 500 head of horses in the Adobe Town area as an interim population level.**

   Do not designate the area as a wild horse reserve.

   Rationale: The Adobe Town area has relatively few man-made intrusions and may possess potential for natural or primitive area designation. The potential of the area for oil and gas, uranium and oil shale development detracts from designation as a horse preserve. Low forage production potential and the need for livestock and wildlife forage in the area were considered in the establishment of the interim population level.

   Managing the area as a horse reserve cannot be supported considering its remoteness, administrative problems, minimal visitor use, resource conflicts and public opinion.

2. **Allocate 2,400 AUMs to support a population of 200 horses in the Flat Top-Doty Mountain area as an interim population level.**

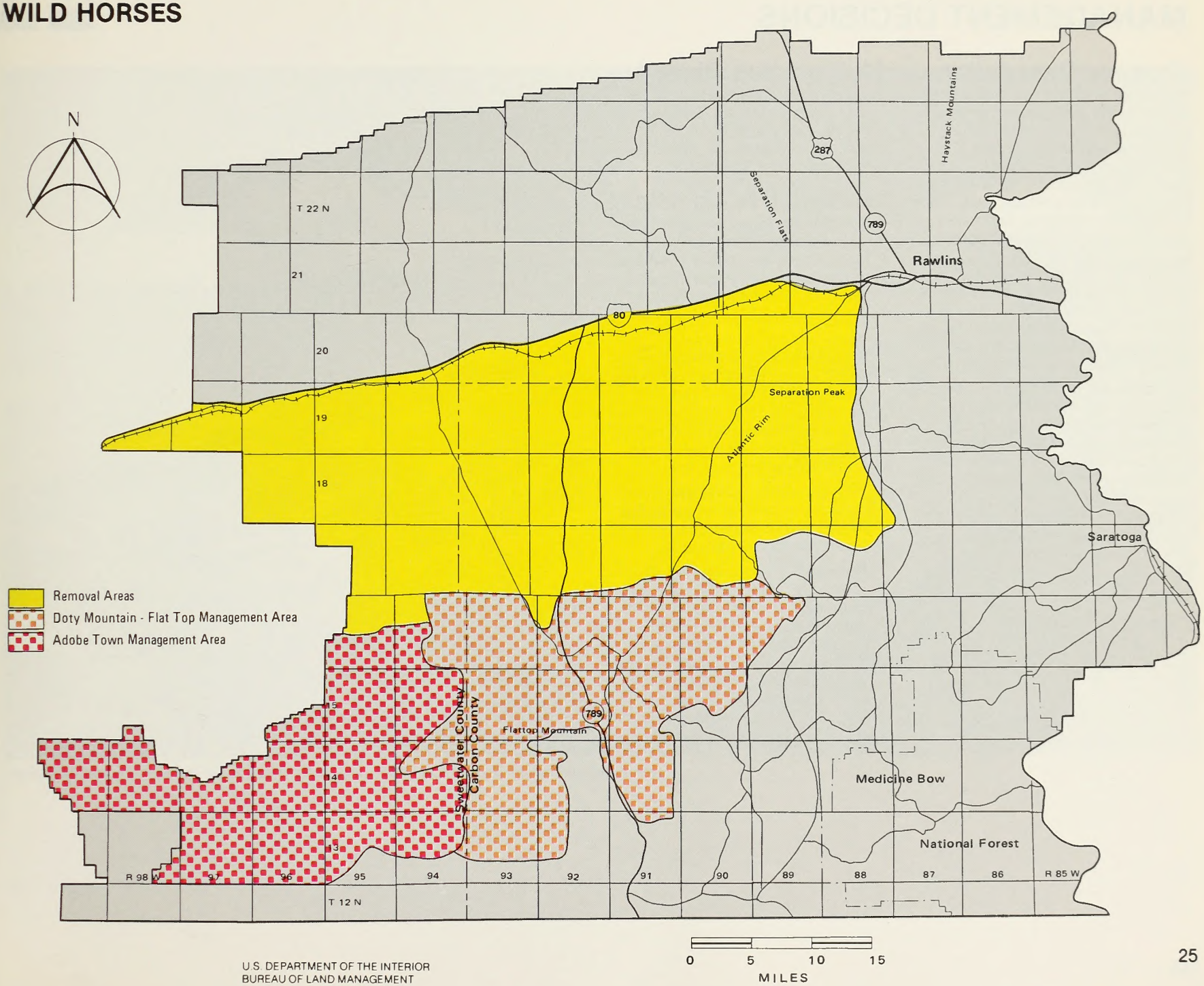
   Rationale: This area supports a large number of antelope and deer during the winter. The area is in an active oil and gas area. Several allotments in the area are managed under an AMP. Public opinion favored management of horses at this level.

3. **Remove all wild horses from the checkerboard area.**

   Rationale: The checkerboard area is approximately 55% private ownership. Any horse management would require cooperative agreements with intermingled private landowners. Due to difficulty in controlling population levels and herd movements, private landowners do not favor these agreements.

Wild horse numbers are increasing by about 20 percent a year—with a proportional increase in the required forage allocation.

WILD HORSES



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FOREST PRODUCTS

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Program Description

The forestry program includes forest management, development and pest and disease control. This involves inventory, evaluation, timber management; sale of forest products such as timber, posts, poles, and other vegetative products from forest lands; timber trespass; and forest pest and disease control programs.

Resource Description

The forest resource on public lands in the unit is limited. The unit contains approximately 54,832 acres of juniper, 23,456 acres of broadleaf trees and 542 acres of conifer trees.

The broadleaf trees are primarily aspen and are classified as non-productive forest. Juniper stands north and west of Baggs are also non-productive forest. The conifer types occur on higher elevations and elevations and are limited to the perimeter of the national forest. These areas are classified as productive forest lands.

The estimated volume of conifer type is 9.4 million board feet.

Multiple Use Objective

Develop productive forest lands for timber management considering watershed, forage and aesthetic values, and maintain existing cover on non-productive forest lands.

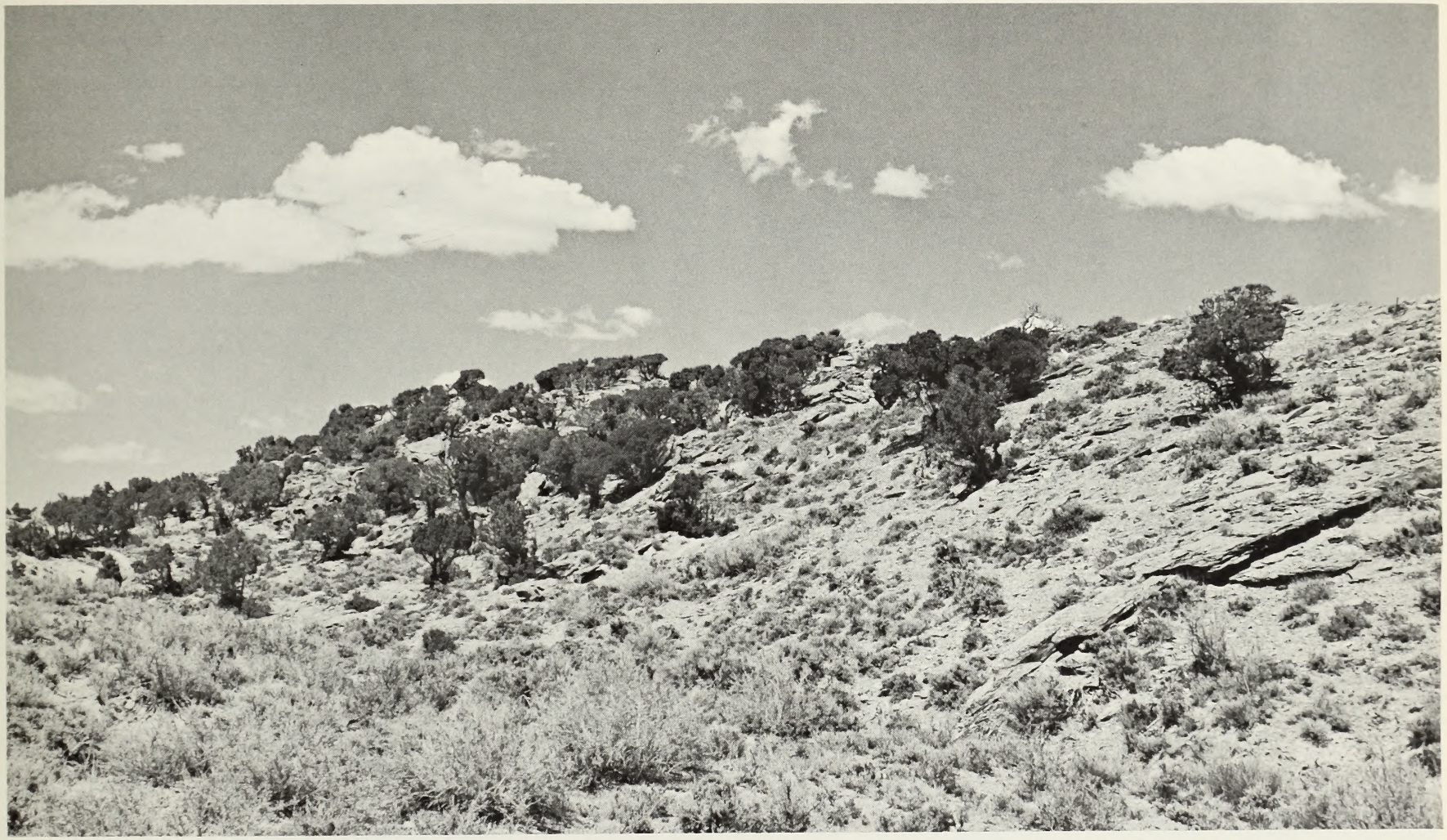
Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Productive forest lands will be managed by thinning operations, salvaging dead and cull material and meeting the need for local demand sales.**

   Rationale: Due to the small amount of timber in the unit, only small timber cutting operations would occur. Using semi-selective harvesting techniques and irregular shaped cutting areas, will result in minor impacts on wildlife, watershed, livestock, recreation and other resource values.

2. **Harvest minor forest products on non-productive lands to the extent that it maintains or improves the forest cover.**

   Rationale: Aspen regenerates rapidly following harvesting. The form class of juniper is such that only scattered trees contain usable products. Harvesting will produce additional growing space for additional trees. The annual producing capacity of these stands is in excess of demands for minor forest products.



Juniper stands, such as this along Powder Rim west of Baggs, are not commercially productive.

WATERSHED

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Program Description

The watershed program is directed towards stabilization of fragile soil resources; maintenance, improvement or restoration of soil productivity; protection and enhancement of water yield and quality; and reduction of flood and sediment damage both on-site and downstream. These objectives are achieved by limiting other land uses, by modification or maintenance of the vegetative cover or by installing water management or control structures. Because of the vast area involved, the primary feature of BLM's watershed management program involves management of other land uses or surface disturbance actions affecting vegetative and soil cover. For example, erosion can usually be reduced by prescribed grazing use that stimulates better vegetative cover.

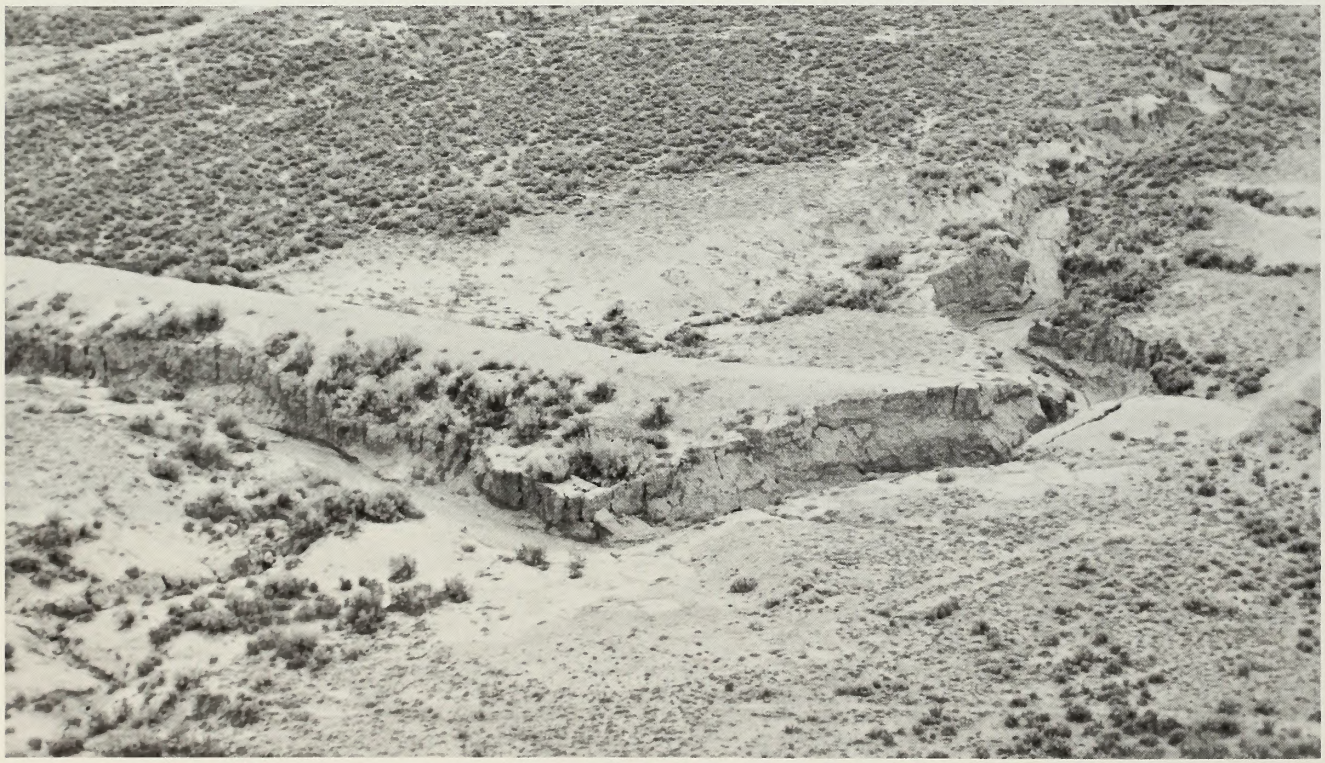
Resource Description

Erosion condition in the area is rated 96% stable, slight and moderate. Four percent of the unit is rated in critical or severe erosion condition. Most erosion is natural geologic erosion.

Water pollution is mainly from "non-point" sources. Known problem areas are Sage Creek Basin (suspended sediments), Sugar Creek (domestic waste) and Poison Basin (selenium). Other suspected problem areas include the Shell Creek and Muddy Creek areas.

Flood damage occurs periodically throughout the unit with washed out roads and stockwater reservoirs.

Activities such as mineral exploration and development, grazing, road and trail construction and pipeline or utility line construction can contribute to watershed problems if not conducted properly.



A washed out stock water reservoir, due to flooding—where man and nature join in water degradation and erosion.

Multiple Use Objective

Manage watershed for maintenance of soil productivity as well as water quantity and quality, and consider and mitigate impacts on watershed values in authorizing and managing other activities.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Restrict surface disturbance on areas of mantle instability.**

   Rationale: Disturbance by man's activities in these areas adds to the instability. Total acreage of this type is extremely limited, but it should be protected due to potential for accelerating erosion, loss of productivity and the aesthetic values and public safety considerations involved.

2. **Include watershed objectives in all activity management plan development and as stipulations on use authorizations.**

   Rationale: Consideration of watershed values is needed in nearly all actions to provide for watershed maintenance and improvement. Maintenance of water control structures and roads is also necessary.

3. **Complete inventories for soils, flood and sediment damage, water quality, water flows and condition of existing structures and projects.**

   Rationale: Additional specific data is needed to adequately manage the watershed resource.

Stream channel erosion on Sage Creek is an example of "natural" erosion to be compensated for by minimizing man-made soil disturbance.

RECREATION

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

(See Recreation Map, page 31.)

Program Description

The recreation program includes the inventory, identification and preservation of natural, historic, archeological and cultural values; the construction, operation and maintenance of recreation facilities; visitor management and the control of recreation activities. Major recreational uses in Wyoming include hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, picnicking, rock hounding, sight-seeing, river floating and an ever expanding variety of off-road vehicle use.

Cultural resource management has become a major activity partially due to the need to protect cultural values from increasing surface disturbance activities.

Resource Description

Recreational values of the unit are closely tied to open space and the relatively natural condition of most of the area. Wildlife provides for hunting and sightseeing.

Rockhounding is popular in certain areas. Petrified wood, fossils, turritella and carnelian agate are the major rocks sought.

Historical values include the Overland Trail. Daily stages traversed this trail from 1862 to 1867. Stage stations were built every twelve miles along the trail. Ten segments of the trail are well preserved with visible ruts, while the rest has been disturbed by modern uses or has weathered beyond easy recognition.

Most of the stage stations are only remnants or completely obliterated. The Bridger Pass site is on the National Register of Historic Places. The trail crosses the checkerboard land pattern resulting in mixed public lands and private ownership. Most (55%) is in private ownership.

Little remains of the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route in the planning unit. Only one stretch of ruts (less than one mile) and the Separation Flats Station are considered worthwhile remnants.

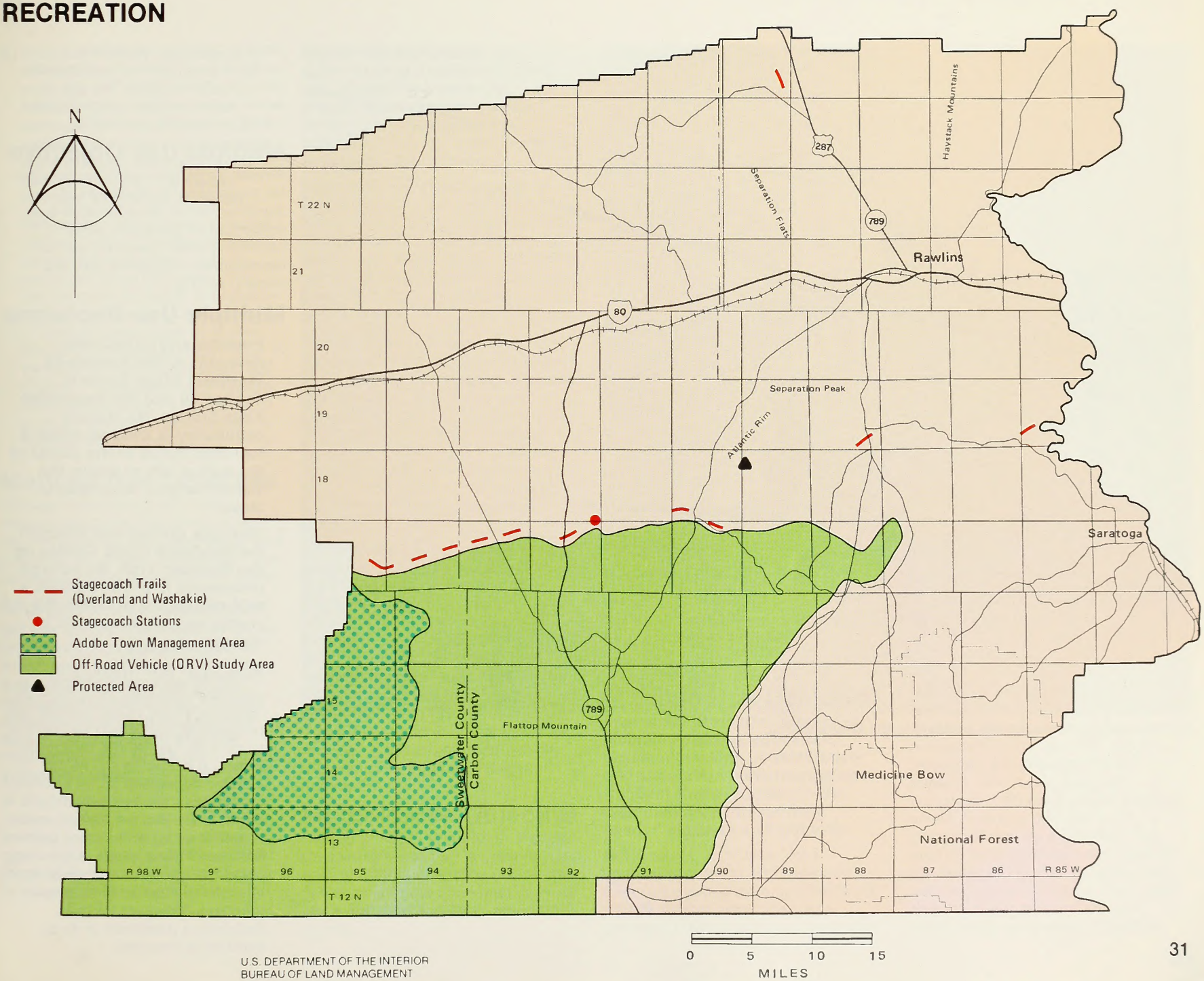
In the southwest corner of the unit is Adobe Town. This area is characterized by interesting geologic formations, abrupt changes in topography (spires and sculptured ridges) and vegetation.

It is a nesting area for the prairie falcon, various hawks and other birds of prey. There is also a high concentration of wild horses. Paleontological and archeological values are present. While man-made intrusions are relatively few, oil and gas leases have been issued for almost the entire area. The potential for increased activity in oil and gas, uranium and oil shale development exists. Wildlife and livestock also make use of the area.

Public access across the checkerboard land pattern, and to other areas, is very limited. The lack of established roads has led to an uncontrolled proliferation of trails and roads. Off-road vehicle use is a major problem. This uncontrolled use detracts from the visual values of the unit and also creates adverse

A mile-wide protection zone is planned for these remains of the Washakie Stage Station.

RECREATION



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Off-road vehicle use is a major problem in the Overland Unit.

impacts on other resources, particularly in terms of watershed damage and erosion. This use is expanding at a rapid rate with the area's increasing population.

Multiple Use Objective

Provide protection and interpretation for those historic resources of significance for the education and enjoyment of the public while permitting other resource use and development consistent with the historic setting.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Preserve and protect the remnants of the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route in Section 30 and the Separation Flats Station. No surface occupancy is allowed within a half-mile radius of the center of the trail or site or within the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**
2. **Stabilize, protect and interpret the Washakie Stage Station on the Overland Trail. No surface occupancy is allowed within a half-mile radius or within the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**

Rationale: 1&2. Disallowing surface occupancy for a half-mile radius or to the visible horizon will primarily affect oil and gas drilling since drill rigs will not be allowed to set up in this zone. Drilling activity, depending on its proximity to a historic site can result in surface disturbance, noise, and activity that is inconsistent with the use of these areas in the historic context for educational, interpretation and recreational purposes. However, in this instance, a maximum of three sections is involved.

3. **Prohibit surface occupancy or disturbance on Overland Trail ruts and the Bridger Pass Historic Site. Reserve from occupancy on well preserved segments a strip one half mile wide on each side of the trail center or within the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**

   Rationale: This decision will also primarily affect oil and gas drilling by precluding setting a drill rig within the limits described. This restriction is desirable to preserve the historic theme of the trail and to prevent destruction of any of the actual running surface. Only 14 miles of trail are involved. The Historic Preservation Act supports the preservation of a resource such as this which possesses national significance.

Multiple Use Objective

Manage those areas with unique natural features in a manner which will minimize surface disturbance and preserve the values present until final management decisions can be made.

Multiple Use Decision

Set the Adobe Town area aside as an "Interim Critical Management Area" until such time as inventory and analysis determine proper management guidelines. Surface disturbance should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the requirements of presently authorized uses.

In the interim period, new access routes should be limited to those needed for oil and gas drilling operations. New roads should be located so as to minimize damage to natural values such as the Adobe Rim and should be obliterated and reclaimed when not needed for production. Geophysical and exploration drilling activities should be controlled through specifications to protect natural values.

Rationale: The area is leased for oil and gas exploration and production. Some drilling is occurring. Restricting commercial activities is not feasible due to legal lease obligations. Public opinion obtained at MFP workshops is not in favor of classification as a natural area.

Tighter restrictions on surface disturbance may slightly impact the exploration and production of oil and gas. However, the oil and gas industry has been cooperative in re-routing and reclaiming roads and relocating drilling sites to protect other resource values. Some control of surface disturbance is necessary to preserve future management options.

Although there are some unique (geologic, flora, and fauna) values in the Adobe area, their extent and location is not known. Other important resource values are also present (i.e., oil and gas, wildlife). Inventories and analyses will be required to formulate a final management plan. In the interim (until 1980-1981) the status quo will be maintained through control of oil and gas activities, off-road vehicle use and other surface-disturbing activity.

Multiple Use Objective

Control of road proliferation and off-road vehicle use that is presently occurring throughout the unit so as to minimize impacts to aesthetics, wildlife, watershed and other resource values.

The fun of four-wheel-drive vehicles is that they don't need roads. The trouble is: they make them.

Multiple Use Decision

Implement protective measures including signing, education, physical blocking, rehabilitation and stipulation on authorizations. Conduct further studies in the identified area to determine needed closures and methods.

Rationale: Uncontrolled and unnecessary roads and trails and their use creates adverse effects on wildlife habitat, watershed and aesthetics. Many of these roads and trails were caused by mineral exploration and development without proper stipulations as well as by unregulated ORV use. The above measures will minimize these impacts. The public supports curtailing of off-road vehicle activity where resource damage is or potentially can be a problem. The area to be studied includes most of the better blocked lands within the unit, including the Adobe Town area and the better blocked areas of public lands southwest of Rawlins.

WILDLIFE

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

(See Wildlife Map, page 35.)

Program Description

The wildlife program is primarily concerned with the protection and improvement of habitat for all forms of game and non-game wildlife species. Wildlife is a major program in this planning unit because of the quality, variety and abundance of game and aquatic habitat. Wildlife values are an important consideration in developing other program decisions.

In order to protect and enhance these values, habitat management planning has become a major component of the wildlife program. The program activity is closely coordinated with the Wyoming State Game and Fish Department in conformance with their responsibilities for game populations.

Resource Description

The geographical area included in this planning unit is widely known for big game values. The Overland Planning Unit is perhaps the stronghold of antelope habitat. Mule deer range over two-thirds of the area, while elk have spread from the foothills around the national forest north and west to Miller Hill, Atlantic Rim and even north of I-80. Black-footed ferrets have historically been found throughout the area, although confirmed habitat is unidentified.

Antelope populations have greatly increased since the early 1900's when competition from cattle and sheep, hunting pressures and severe winters left only scattered herds in Carbon County. Antelope are now the most conspicuous wildlife species in the planning unit. During summer seasons, antelope are scattered throughout the area. In the winter, they usually leave higher elevations for more protected areas at lower elevations. These crucial wintering areas are critical to their survival.

New fence construction will be kept to a minimum to allow maximum freedom for the area's most conspicuous resident, the antelope.

Primary conflicts with other grazing animals include competition for winter range among cattle, sheep wild horses. Coal mining, oil and gas development and community expansion all affect habitat to some degree. Fencing creates a severe conflict for antelope, especially when coupled with deep snow.

Mule deer range over two-thirds of the planning unit, with migration patterns evolving from summer use in higher elevations of the forest to the lower south slopes, river bottoms and juniper areas in the winter. Much of the area is also subject to year-long use. A total of 189,000 acres (55% of which is public land) is considered crucial habitat. This acreage is mostly preferred winter range necessary for maintaining population levels. Primary conflicts for deer are similar to antelope, involving livestock, wild horses, fencing, mineral development and human disturbance. In addition, competition occurs to an unknown extent with the large elk herd in the southern part of the unit.

Elk herds have increased from near zero before 1953 to approximately 2,500 head. These elk graze the high elevation national forests in the summer and fall and spread north and west throughout about one-sixth of the planning unit in the winter. Some remain yearlong in the planning unit on Atlantic Rim, Miller Hill and in the Savery Valley.

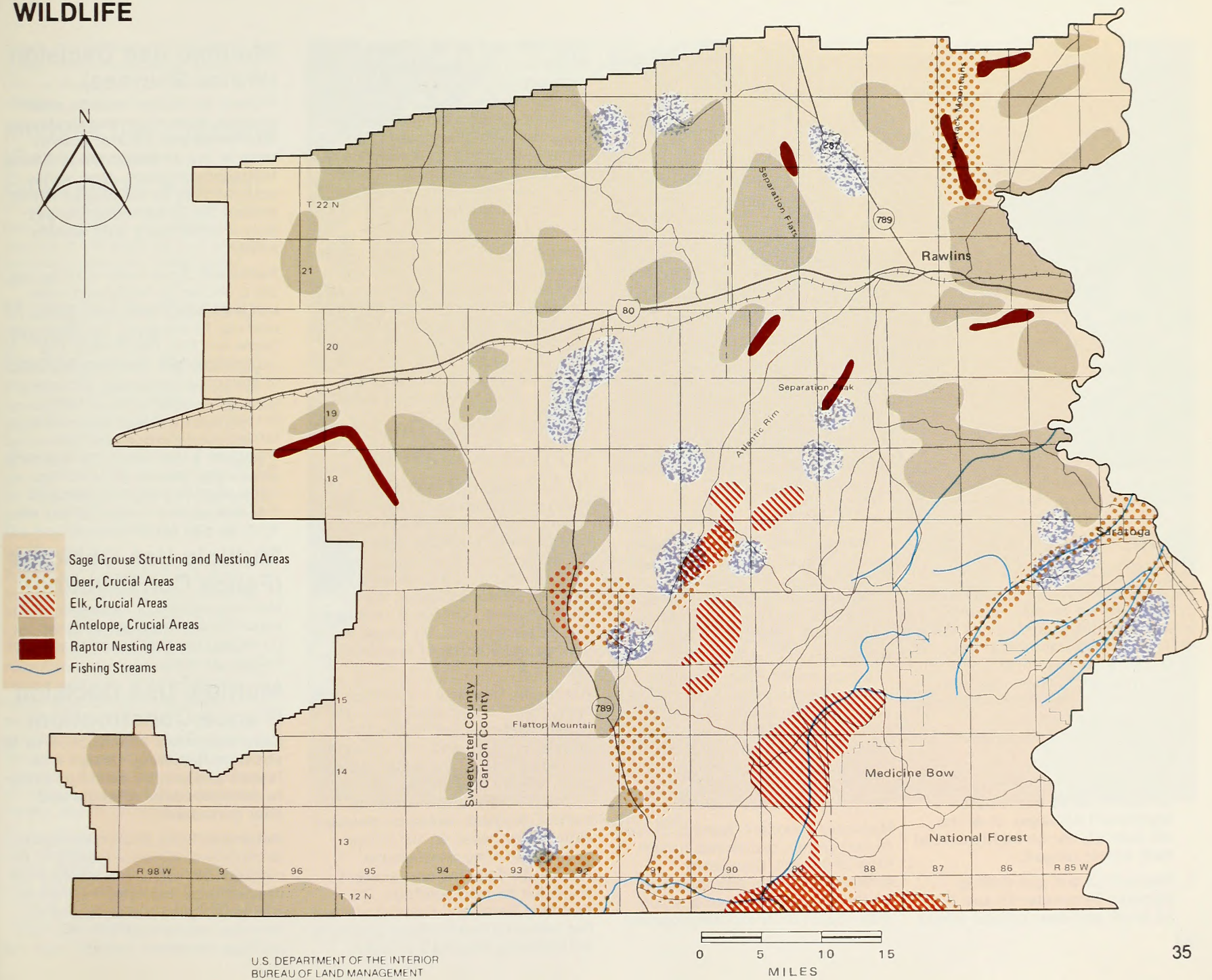
Elk are extremely susceptible to human disturbances, such as coal mining, oil and gas activities, snowmobile and four-wheel drive pursuits. Wild horses are increasing rapidly, using forage, important to survival of the elk, in crucial wintering areas. Major plans for coal development overlap crucial elk habitat in the Atlantic Rim, Savery Valley and Little Snake River Valley. Some 107,000 acres of elk habitat (mostly winter range) have been designated as crucial to their life-sustaining needs.

Several species of upland and small game occur within the planning unit. Cottontail rabbits are widespread throughout the area as are several non-game species (coyotes, jackrabbits, badgers, prairie dogs and others). Sage grouse are found in all parts of the planning unit and provide a very significant number of hunter days annually. Blue grouse are numerous around the fringes of the national forest lands. Columbian sharptails and ruffed grouse are present in isolated population pockets.

Multiple Use Objective (Crucial Areas and Habitat Protection)

Maintain and improve the quality of existing habitat with special attention to crucial areas (i.e., winter ranges, nesting areas and calving grounds) to support present population levels. The final objective is to set population levels in harmony with other resource values based on inventories yet to be completed.

WILDLIFE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Flattop Mountain
Sweetwater County
Carbon County
Sage Grouse Strutting and Nesting Areas
Deer, Crucial Areas
Elk, Crucial Areas
Antelope, Crucial Areas
Raptor Nesting Areas
Fishing Streams
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MILES

Prairie dogs provide "habitat" for the endangered black-footed ferret, which may or may not exist in the unit.

Multiple Use Decision (Crucial Areas)

Minimize destruction of vegetation in all identified crucial habitat areas by limiting surface use and disturbance during critical use seasons, or by requiring restoration or by reserving high value crucial areas from activities where impacts cannot be mitigated. Specific decisions include:

- **Coal leases will not be issued on public lands containing significant acreages of winter elk habitat, nor on highly crucial deer winter ranges.**
- **Restrict oil and gas drilling between December 15 and April 15 in elk and deer crucial winter ranges; from March 15 to June 30 in sage grouse nesting and strutting areas and require a minimum of 250 feet distance for drill site locations from any fisheries.**

Rationale: Crucial areas for deer, elk and sage grouse cover a major portion of the planning unit. These areas are essential to survival of the species due to certain food, cover or isolation requirements. Reduction or elimination of these areas usually affects wildlife populations on a much wider geographical area.

Nationally important deposits of coal, oil and gas are distributed through most of the unit. Completely eliminating surface disturbance in crucial areas would have a region-wide impact on energy development and other resource programs. Many of the activities associated with these programs (i.e., rights-of-way, timber harvesting, coal mining) are limited in the area covered and the duration of disturbance. In many cases, rehabilitation measures maintain or improve site productivity. In other situations, reclamation is not feasible in terms of restoring crucial area characteristics.

Considering these facts, oil and gas drilling is restricted in crucial big game winter ranges from December to April and in nesting and strutting grounds during breeding and mating seasons. Coal leasing is allowed in antelope ranges in view of their tolerance levels, but not in the priority deer and elk crucial areas.

Multiple Use Decisions (Forage Allocation in Crucial Areas)

Make no reductions in livestock AUMs or season of use in wildlife crucial areas until the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and BLM, consulting with private land-owners, jointly establish the number of elk, deer and antelope desired in the unit, as based on further acquisition of resource data.

Rationale: Resource inventories have not yet been completed in the detail required to set numbers of wildlife, livestock and wild horses. It is anticipated that the required data gathering will be completed by 1979 at which time allocations can be made. Changes in livestock grazing patterns, as based on insufficient data, would bring questionable returns. To date, the crucial areas are in fair to good condition. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has indicated that livestock grazing is not presently causing a problem.

Multiple Use Decision (Water Sources)

Protect all crucial wildlife water sources from excessive livestock, wild horse and mineral activity uses in the development of future management plans. New water sources may be developed within critical big game winter ranges only if in harmony with wildlife needs.

Rationale: Some water sources are being abused by heavy wild horse and mineral activities with some over-use by livestock. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and public sentiment are strongly in favor of protecting crucial components of the habitat. Elimination of water development within crucial winter ranges would have an adverse impact on future range management. The Bureau has not identified all water sources needing protection. Nor does it have water rights in all sources that are needed.

Multiple Use Objective (Fence Construction)

Maintain existing or increased populations of antelope and deer by protecting the quality and quantity of habitat provided.

Multiple Use Decision (Fence Construction)

Keep new fence construction to an absolute minimum. Design new fences and modify existing fences to accommodate antelope and deer movement.

Rationale: Some fencing is required to implement livestock grazing management systems necessary for desired range improvement. Fences can be designed and controlled to minimize interference with deer and antelope movement and still meet the

needs of livestock management. The public favors reasonable livestock control but not at the expense of wildlife.

Multiple Use Objective (Raptors and Endangered Species)

Protect, maintain and improve the habitat quality for all species of raptors in the planning unit and for existing or potential endangered species.

Multiple Use Decision (Raptors and Endangered Species)

Prohibit the use of toxicants for control of insects, rodents, prairie dogs or other species used by raptors or endangered species. Maintain all areas with a density of eight or more prairie dog towns of 30 acres or more per township until the presence or absence of the blackfooted ferret can be confirmed.

Rationale: Currently there is no significant use of toxicants for the above purposes; therefore, the impacts of the decision are insignificant. Toxicants can limit reproduction in addition to causing raptor mortality. In other areas, raptor populations have been severely decreased as a result of toxicants. The Overland Planning Unit provides premium habitat for wintering eagles and nesting areas for prairie falcons and ferruginous hawks and other raptors.

A blackfooted ferret recovery team has established the above criteria for ferret habitat in black-tailed prairie dog areas. We assume the same criteria is satisfactory for white-tailed prairie dog areas.

Mule deer range over two-thirds of the Overland Unit.

CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

Lands

The lands MFP decisions will prevent the proliferation of major transportation, communication and utility rights-of-way across public lands. They will encourage the orderly growth and expansion of existing communities rather than new towns and camps in the vicinity of developing mining areas. The designation of the Adobe Town area as an Interim Critical Management Area will protect the area for possible inclusion in the wilderness system pending the outcome of studies.

Minerals

The minerals MFP decisions will result in impacts which are both beneficial and adverse. For example, the coal leasing decisions (subject to environmental statement findings) could put into production large amounts of badly needed energy for electrical power generation. Significant increases in employment will be noted along with increases in income and local tax revenues. Development of new services and shopping facilities will follow.

On the other hand, housing will be in extremely short supply, mobile homes will proliferate, the cost of living will increase significantly and public services (schools, municipal facilities, etc.) will be unable to meet demands at least in the short run. The quality of life will be adversely affected in the short run and long-standing life styles will change due to rapid and significant population growth. Communities will sprawl in a helter-skelter manner if stringent, comprehensive land use guidelines are not imposed and enforced.

The MFP decisions relative to oil and gas will encourage mineral exploration and development while protecting wildlife populations and habitat simultaneously. Less than one-tenth of one percent of the unit (public lands) has a no-surface occupancy restriction.

Planning decisions consider the protection of crucial habitat areas for elk, deer, antelope and sage grouse by partial or total restriction of mining activity. However, mineral development will cause short term and some long-term destruction of wildlife habitat, mostly within the checkerboard land pattern and to the Savery area. Some wildlife loss may result.

Livestock Forage

The livestock forage MFP decisions are designed to maximize use of the forage on public lands and minimize environmental damage. Some fences may be constructed which may create minimal obstructions to wildlife migrations. However, others will be modified to facilitate the movement of wildlife. Location of water developments will consider wildlife needs. Vegetation modification will not produce major adverse effect due to careful planning and layout.

Wild Horses

Wild horse management will reduce and stabilize horse populations in harmony with other resource values. This would reduce future competition with wildlife and livestock for available forage. It would also provide a basis for stabilizing the environment and improving vegetation. It would also mean that fewer horses would be visible to the public.

Forestry

Forestry MFP decisions will cause only minimal impacts which would be confined to minor surface disturbance, the interruption of natural visual patterns in the landscape and temporary minor disturbance to wildlife. Beneficial impacts would similarly be minor and limited to the enhanced productivity of 542 acres of forested land.

Watershed

Minimal impacts will result from the MFP watershed decisions. They are limited to re-routing rights-of-way from critical areas, slightly increasing maintenance needs or road construction costs to prevent erosion. Beneficial impacts include decreases in soil erosion and maintenance of water quality.

Recreation

Beneficial impacts expected from the recreation decisions are: maintained aesthetic quality along the highways in the planning unit and preservation of historic values along the Overland Trail and Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route. No significant adverse impacts are expected.

Wildlife

The wildlife decisions are designed to benefit wildlife habitat and species, while in most cases not significantly impacting other resource programs. Recommendations are aimed at protection and improvement of crucial wildlife habitat areas such as big game winter ranges as well as nesting and strutting areas. Recommendations specifically consider vegetative cover, potential surface or noise disturbance, critical water sources and management of livestock as it affects wildlife habitat. Some adverse impacts will be caused by restrictions on mineral development, both seasonal and permanent. Upon acquisition of added resource data in the near future, the wildlife part of the MFP will be revised to set specific population levels consistent with other resource values.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PLANS

During development of the Overland MFP, a special effort was made to coordinate this plan with other federal, state and local government agencies. This was to ensure that BLM planning decisions do not conflict with land use plans of other agencies. Agencies or government officials contacted, in addition to the public meeting, include: U.S. Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Carbon County Commissioners, Carbon County Planning Commission, Sweetwater County Commissioners, Sweetwater County Planning Commission. Other adjacent BLM districts were contacted to ensure interdistrict coordination.

On February 11, 1977, the major proposed decisions were also presented to Wyoming state agency officials in Cheyenne, with approximately 20 state department heads or their representatives in attendance. Decisions in the plan conform with local county zoning ordinances and also consider major land use proposals, such as the Bureau of Reclamation's Savery-Pothook plan.

Many of the decisions in the Overland MFP will have significant on- and off-site implications affecting other agencies. Major decisions relative to coal development could foreseeably affect every agency mentioned. For some government organizations, coal development on a large scale would create significant workloads, especially for the State Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Geological Survey.

Decisions relative to making public lands available for community expansion and public purposes should benefit local governments concerned with future growth in several communities. Intensifying livestock grazing will impact agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, State Land Board and Forest Service which work with the same range users under their areas of jurisdiction.

Range management practices may affect wildlife populations either beneficially or adversely requiring involvement of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Existing procedures call for cooperative planning in range management by all agencies involved.

Wildlife management decisions have been coordinated closely with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to ensure that BLM management of the habitat is coordinated with the department's objectives for each wildlife species.

These are examples of the coordination which has taken place on some of the major issues.

Almost any decision made in this MFP process affects other government organizations and their land use plans.

Gene Kinch, assistant district manager, airs public land use proposals at a public meeting in Rawlins.

ACTIONS AFTER THE MFP

This plan will be followed by on-the-ground actions based on the decisions listed. These actions are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. An environmental assessment is prepared for each action whether it is initiated by industry or BLM. If the impacts are unacceptable, the proposed action may be modified or rejected.

The implementation of on-the-ground actions initiated by BLM is contingent upon the necessary funding by the Congress. It may be some time before these decisions are implemented.

This plan will be continually updated. As new resource information becomes available, as technology improves, as needs and demands change and as laws, regulations and policies change, this plan will be revised.

Any major changes in this plan will be subject to public review and comment.

GLOSSARY

As in most systems, BLM's Planning System has its own "language." To help you understand some of the terms used in this brochure, a glossary is included for reference.

Checkerboard Land Pattern: A land ownership pattern resulting from early railroad grants made by the federal government to the Union Pacific Railroad Company to encourage construction of a transcontinental railroad system and settlement of the west. Generally, even numbered sections are government owned and odd numbered sections privately owned.

Management Framework Plan (MFP): A planning decision document which establishes, for a given planning area, land use allocations, coordination guidelines for multiple use and management objectives to be achieved for each class of land use or protection. The MFP is the Bureau's Land Use Plan. It is prepared in three steps: Step One — Resource Recommendations; Step Two — Impact Analysis and Alternative Development; and Step Three — Decisionmaking.

Mining Plan: A description of the area to be mined, the method and equipment to be used and the reclamation proposed.

Natural Area: Areas established to preserve scenic values and areas of natural wonder. The preservation of these resources in their natural condition is the primary management objective. Access roads, parking areas and public use facilities are normally located on the periphery of the area. The public is encouraged to walk into the area for recreation purposes.

Off-Road Vehicle: Any vehicle capable of, or designed for travel on or immediately over land, water, or other natural terrain, deriving motor power from any sources other than muscle, excluding: (1) any non-amphibious registered motorboat; (2) any military, fire, emergency, law enforcement or other government vehicle while being used for official or emergency purposes; and (3) any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the authorized officer or otherwise officially approved.

Planning Area: One or more complete planning units for which a land use plan is to be prepared.

Planning Area Analysis: This document analyzes requirements of the public now and in the future for lands and renewable and nonrenewable resource. It shows the significance of the lands within a planning area to users, operators, the community and the region. This document is based on data in the URA, Socio-Economic Profile and other regional information.

Planning Unit: A portion of a Bureau of Land Management district used for assembling resource inventory data. For each planning unit the district manager prepares a Unit Resource Analysis.

Primitive Area: Natural, wild and undeveloped lands in settings essentially removed from the effects of civilization. Essential characteristics are a natural environment that can be conserved and on which there is no undue disturbance by roads and commercial uses.

Riparian Vegetation: Vegetation associated with the area or zone along the bank of a river or other body of water.

Section 3: A part of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 which provides the means to issue permits to qualified individuals for the purpose of grazing livestock on specific areas of public lands within "grazing district" boundaries.

Section 15: A part of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 which provides the means to issue grazing leases to "qualified individuals" who wish to graze livestock on public lands outside grazing district boundaries.

Socio-Economic Profile: An information document for use in plan preparation. It describes the human populations in terms of social and economic factors and also provides a checklist of other state and federal agencies to be consulted. It analyzes and records data relating to a relatively large region or area sharing similar socio-economic characteristics. A region may be a group of entire, adjoining counties, or it may approximate a district and may include several planning areas.

Unit Resource Analysis (URA): A basic source of information on the land and its resources, consisting of:

Base Map
Physical Profile
Resource Inventories
Resource potential and capability to fill the public's needs for: lands, minerals, recreation, wildlife, watershed, forest products, and range management.
Ecological Profile: a description and an analysis of the existing state of the ecosystems in the planning system.

PHOTO CREDITS

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COMMENT SHEET

(tear here)

District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Rawlins, Wyoming 82301

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307-362-6613

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Molyneux Bldg.
Pinedale, WY 82941
307-367-4358

Kemmerer Resource Area
P.O. Box 632
Kemmerer, WY 83101
307-877-3933

Rawlins District Office
P.O. Box 670
1300 3rd Street
Rawlins, WY 82301
307-324-6621

***Divide Resource Area**

***Medicine Bow Resource Area**

Lander Resource Area
P.O. Box 589
Lander, WY 82520
307-332-4220

Worland District Office
P.O. Box 119
1700 Robertson Ave.
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307-347-6151

***Shoshone Resource Area**

***Washakie Resource Area**

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